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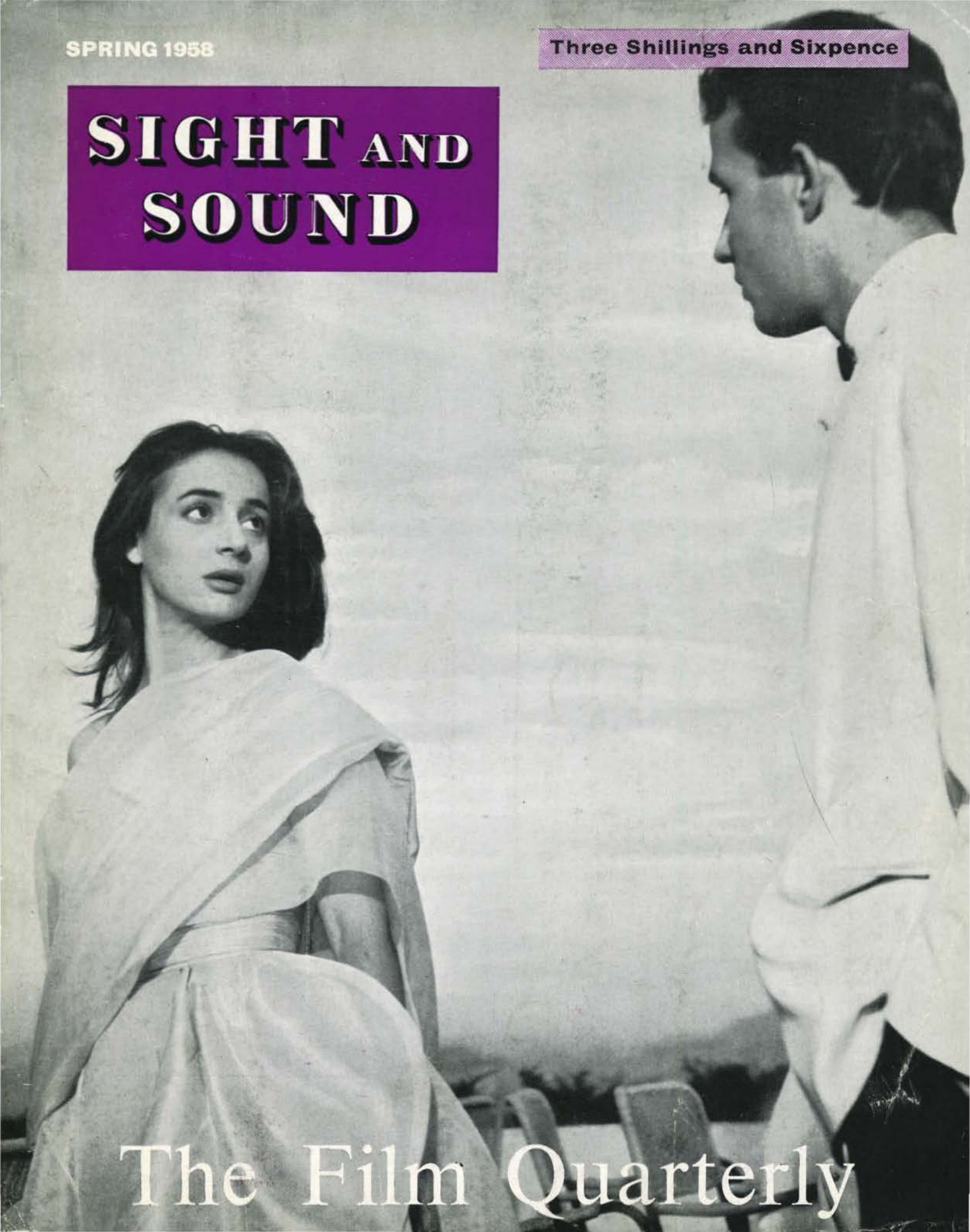
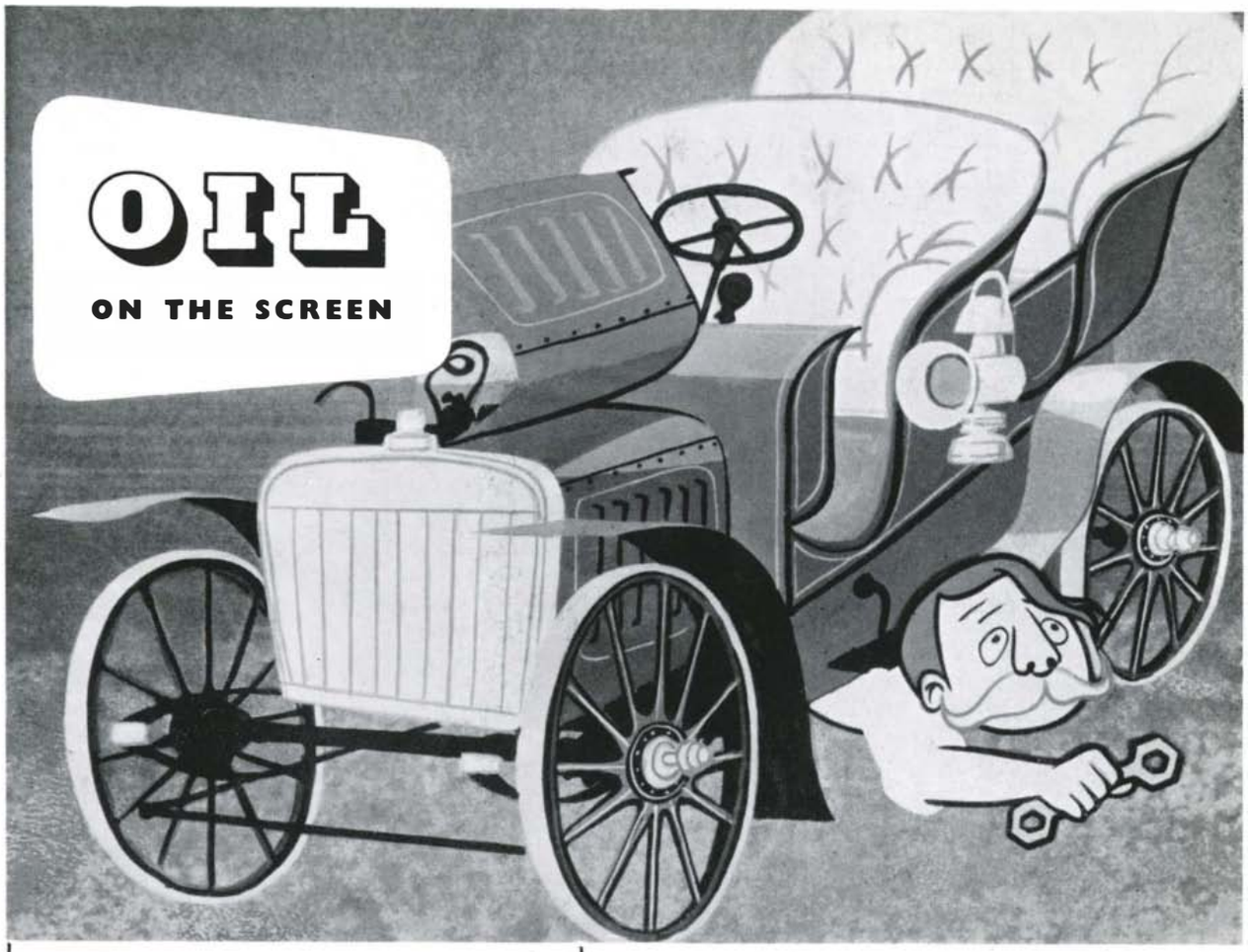
# SIGHT AND SOUND



The Film Quarterly

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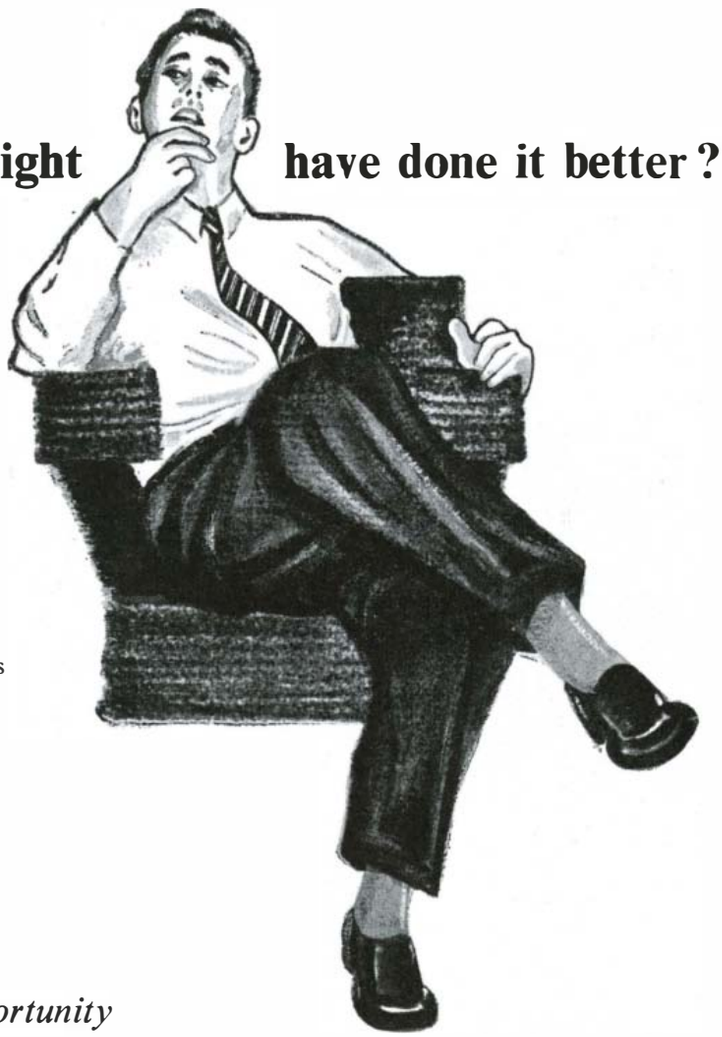

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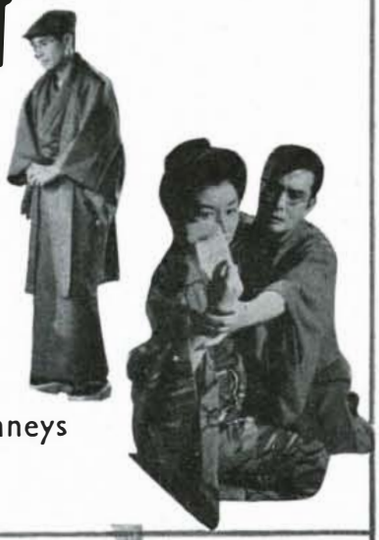

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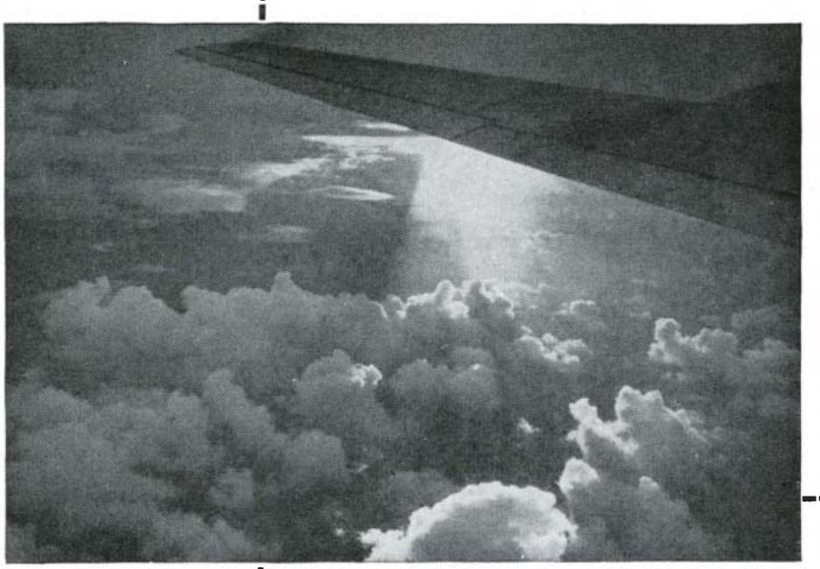

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# SIGHT AND SOUND

The International Film Quarterly

VOLUME 27 No. 4 SPRING


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The Swedish director Arne Sucksdorff (in the water, foreground) is here directing *En Djungelsaga*, on which he has been working for nearly two years. Shot in CinemaScope and Eastman Colour, this feature-length film describes the life of the Muria tribe who inhabit the Bastar district of Central India. The leading parts are played by two Muria youths, Chandru and Ginju. This is Sucksdorff's second Indian venture; in 1951 he made two short films there, *Indian Village* and *The Wind and the River*.

# THE FRONT PAGE

IN this issue of SIGHT AND SOUND, the leading article is concerned with the economic affairs of the British film industry, the crisis of which everyone has become aware in the past few months as cinemas shut down and audiences decline. It is not our crisis alone. In America, television hit the cinema earlier and perhaps even harder; in France and Italy, where television as yet counts for relatively little, the film industries have been meeting economic difficulties of their own. From the pronouncements of many of its spokesmen, the impression given is that the Western cinema is on the defensive.

Looking Eastward, one sees a different picture: vast industries in Japan and India, of whose products the West is just becoming aware; a Soviet cinema beginning to advance again after the hiatus caused by the dead years of Stalinism; new industries in countries like Hungary and Poland. In the past few years there has been enormous widening of the cinema's horizons; and much of this expansion has taken the form of a discovery of the East by the West (films from India, Japan, China, East Germany, Poland, Hungary have recently been seen in London) and a discovery by some Eastern industries of their own potential.

It would be too simple for a film historian with the instincts of a Toynbee or a Spengler to assume that another chapter was being written in the decline of the West. Too simple, and also too misleading. Expansion in the East is part creative development, part industrial advance: these countries have growing publics for the cinema, audiences in some cases starved of entertainment. In Britain and America, conversely, film-going reached something approaching saturation point in the first year after the war; some decline was inevitable, and a period of diminished assurance, industrial uncertainty, was bound to follow the confident years. The Eastern cinemas are working for audiences who have not founded their ideas of the cinema on Hollywood, have fewer pre-conceptions about the nature of entertainment. In the West, tastes are changing as television itself expands the range of audience experience, but the cinema has the problem of maintaining contact with its public. And the problems of the Western cinema are complicated by the fact that we have been through our period of industrial growth, one consequence of which is the present high cost of film-making. In Poland, the average production costs only about £20,000, in France £100,000, in England nearer £200,000, in America £300,000 or more. Industries which are able to make products at a relatively low cost, for an expanding market, confront industries whose products are expensive—at least in part because of higher living standards—and whose home markets are contracting. All the same, in creative as well as economic terms, all this looks more like a recession than a slump.

Probably the first necessity for the West is a recovery of economic stability and the revival of nerve that should go with it. This is what makes the present economic situation of our own industry particularly important. *The Times*, discussing the cinema a few months ago in a leading article, claimed that film-makers put too much confidence in the old routines, that the need was for creative rejuvenation. But film-making demands not merely an investment in talent and enterprise but in hard cash, and the situation must be analysed in terms of how conditions can be achieved in which a creative industry may hope to flourish.

Looking Eastwards is an aid towards seeing our own affairs in a world perspective. In the cinema's history, there has probably never been more wide-ranging activity and more varied enterprise than exists at the moment. With our own immediate problems in mind, it is still worth remembering this. For a long time, the British cinema has been inclined to take its compass bearings from Hollywood. But Hollywood no longer holds its unchallenged position as the film-making capital of the world, and the American cinema itself is changing. Given a reasonable degree of economic stability, the British cinema could profit by the changes which are bound to come; but we need also our own share of the confidence which animates the expanding industries.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

# TIME OF CRISIS

MORE or less at the turn of the year, three events, separated by only a few weeks, dramatically crystallised the present problems of the film industry in Britain. In mid-December there was the BBC's announcement, made with a certain flourish, that it had acquired television rights for seven years to 100 RKO features and intended to screen them at 9 o'clock on Saturday evenings, traditionally the time when most people are assumed to be out looking for entertainment. Then came Mr. John Davis's statement that the Rank Organisation had been compelled to shelve four productions scheduled for late-1958 and to dismiss some 300 workers from Pinewood. The announcement carried a familiar, warning proviso: "Our decision to make these films will be influenced by the degree of Entertainments Tax relief that will presumably be announced in the coming Budget." Almost simultaneously, the Board of Trade released its statistics for cinema attendance during the third quarter of 1957, revealing one particular figure to seize on: a 20 per cent decline in cinema-going since the corresponding period of 1956.

A declining audience, the threat of unemployment in the studios, mounting competition from television—the cinema's problems, not in themselves new, came sharply back into the news. "The cinema is in your hands, Mr. Chancellor".

. . . . "Can 1958 save the cinema?" . . . . "The Cinema Bores Me" (a petulant heading to an article by J. B. Priestley) expressed headline writers' responses to the situation. *Panorama* conducted an inconclusive investigation, in the course of which Diana Dors spoke up against Entertainments Tax and Sir Tom O'Brien demanded rationalisation rather than nationalisation. The film industry, with considerable support from the Press, intensified its long-standing campaign against Entertainments Tax. Messages sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer included a reminder that among cinemas recently shut down was one in his own constituency and that "his constituents in Dawlish were now deprived of film entertainment."

Through Press leaders and the statements of industry spokesmen, reports of cinemas closing and others struggling to keep open, the facts of the crisis have been brought before the public. But there have been crises before. In the past, problems have been primarily those of production; and Government aid—in the form of the Quota, the National Film Finance Corporation, the Production Fund—has been mainly designed to assist and encourage the producer. The present situation is not simply another production crisis, and the issues it raises are more complex than the problems of whether Entertainments Tax should be abolished, or whether television should be allowed to show old feature films.

With nearly eight million television sets now operating, the cinema is in danger of losing the position it has for so long held as the greatest medium for public entertainment. One mass medium is rapidly overtaking another and in the process the cinema itself is changing. Attitudes to it, however, remain fundamentally unchanged. The Government, in particular, has regarded the cinema as an entertainment industry to be taxed, and also as a production industry to be kept alive through various forms of aid. Unlike some foreign governments, it has not, except under the stimulus of war, seemed greatly concerned with the film as a means of public information, an expression of national attitudes. It has not sought to control its development as in the case of radio and television. But the solutions found in the present crisis cannot be considered solely in economic terms, or solely in terms of the film as entertainment. Also at stake is the position of the cinema in our society; and it is the degree of importance we attach to this which will finally determine how the economic problems are resolved, how a contracting industry—in terms at least of its home market—can be prevented from becoming a declining one.

## *The Audience*

| July-September Quarter | Quarterly Cinema Admissions ('000's) | Total Number of Cinemas Reporting | Total Seating Capacity |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1952 . . . . | 335,215 | 4,556 | 4,197,473 |
| 1954 . . . . | 337,046 | 4,513 | 4,150,440 |
| 1956 . . . . | 293,434 | 4,377 | 4,054,000 |
| 1957 . . . . | 235,202 | 4,171 | 3,891,000 |

*Source:* Board of Trade Statistics.

THE MOST RECENT Board of Trade statistics available deal with the third quarter of 1957, and the above table shows some of the figures for this particular quarter in relation to corresponding periods in previous years. The picture of what is happening emerges clearly enough. In five years, nearly 400 cinemas have shut down, or something under 9 per cent of the 1952 total. During the same period, however, attendances have fallen by about 30 per cent. Comparing the number of admissions during this third quarter of 1957 with the total seating capacity of the cinemas, one can work out that each cinema seat was occupied, on an average, approximately 60.5 times during a 90-day period—that is, for 60.5 *actual performances*. (Comparable figure for 1952: 79.8

| Year | Total Box-Office Admissions (Millions) | Average Admissions Per Week (Millions) | Annual Gross Box-Office Receipts (£ Million) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1936 . . . . | 917 | 17.6 | 38.6 |
| 1941 . . . . | 1,309 | 25.2 | 65.0 |
| 1946 . . . . | 1,635 | 31.4 | 118.3 |
| 1951 . . . . | 1,365 | 26.3 | 108.3 |
| 1956 . . . . | 1,101 | 21.2 | 104.2 |
| 1957 . . . . | 925* | 17.8* | — |

* *Financial Times* estimate of admissions for 1957.
*Source:* Board of Trade Estimates and Statistics.

This second table shows the changing state of the cinema over the past twenty years, in terms of audience attendance and box-office receipts. In 1936, the total receipts amounted to not a great deal more than the sum paid out annually during recent years in



Photograph on opposite page by *Illustrated*.

Entertainments Tax; in 1946, they reached their highest point, at £118 million. During the first nine months of 1957, a total of £72.4 million was collected at the box-office; and it seems beyond any doubt that in 1957, for the first time since 1943, annual receipts will prove to have fallen below the hundred million pound mark.

Increased seat-prices have prevented this fall in box-office takings from appearing too extreme. This is not the case with actual admissions. From the industry's point of view, the most alarming aspect is the sudden, amazingly rapid and largely unforeseen acceleration of the decline. During 1951-54, attendances fell only from 1,365 million a year to 1,276 million. Two years later, they were down to 1,101 million. In 1957, they will almost certainly prove to have dropped well below 950 million. This makes 1957 the worst year for cinema-going in Britain since 1937; it also marks a decline of over 40 per cent from the peak year of 1946, an exact enough parallel to the situation reached in America two years or more ago.

Obviously, there is a point at which stabilisation will be reached, at which the fall will be checked and some of the lost audience may even be recaptured. The question is, when can we expect this point to be reached? The second table, with the upward progression in admissions from 1936-46 and downward curve during the post-war years, may provide some clue. The spread of television has been enormously rapid—much more so than was expected even three or four years ago—and there is no mistaking the fact that the sharpest falling-off in cinema-going coincides with the coming of commercial television and its as yet incomplete advance across the country. But the charms of TV seem to wear off; and it is not without significance that the BBC has itself recently recovered slightly from the commercial companies' first pillaging of its audience. It may well be that by 1960 or so a fair degree of stabilisation will be reached. And it may be not unreasonable to guess that cinema attendances will then settle down at about 18 million a week, or roughly the pre-war figure. Whatever this represents in terms of the glorious days of 1946, it would still leave Britain with a very sizeable cinema public in proportion to the total population. What cannot be envisaged, though, is any return to the 30-million-a-week days, the time of the cinema's unchallenged domination. On occasion, for a film of spectacular drawing power, the lost audience will be won back. What seems to have gone is the old cinema-going habit, the certainty that there was always a loyal, unquestioning public who could be trusted to visit the 'local' two or three times a week, whatever the story and whoever the stars.

What does this mean in human terms? First, of course, that television has become the habit; that people, and especially older people, looking in the most casual way for diversion, will find it at home, by turning a knob. And, it must inevitably be recognised, reliance on this 'habit' audience is in itself one of the greatest incentives to mediocrity. It is an incentive which is certainly making its effects felt in television.

Television, though, is not the only factor. A recent article in *The Times* noted that "not a single new cinema has been put up in any of the new towns or on any of the 20 or more big housing estates of the L.C.C. built since the war, although sites for cinemas have been earmarked since the planning stages." The reasons, the article discovered, "are not so much that television has stolen the screen from the cinema, but that many people today have new homes where the entertainment of their families and friends is more comfortable and pleasurable than anything they have known before. . . . For outside entertainment, many are returning to dancing, which, it was suggested at one place, is on an equal footing with television in competing with the cinema in popularity." Ironically enough, the new dance-hall may itself be a former cinema.

*The Times*' article confirms a fairly widespread impression. If the function of the cinema in our society has partly been to provide an escape from drabness—dismal and uncomfortable living conditions, dull and tiring jobs—then any rise in the standard of living is likely to make escape as such seem less desirable and to weaken the cinema's attractions. Socially, it is certainly no bad thing that people with more money to spend should prefer motor-cars, sport, records and record-players (a significantly booming industry), greater comfort at home and greater variety of entertainment outside, to vicarious living by way of an escapist screen. If the cinema's audiences are proving disloyal, in other words, it may not merely be because they have been lured away by the siren delights of television, but because the cinema as diversion is fulfilling a less significant social purpose. This does not mean that people no longer look to the cinema for entertainment. Rather, it means that they are likely to look more positively, reject more firmly: that the audience of 1958 is not just the audience of 1946 on a reduced scale. And this conclusion in itself forces some rethinking of the cinema's pattern of production.

## *Production Policies*

EVENTS IN THIS country seem to be following so closely on the American pattern—rising living standards, the advance of television, falling cinema attendances—that it is worth looking at the new production strategies now unmistakably being adopted in the United States. In general terms, the present American production policy seems to break down roughly as follows:—

1. The big box-office "blockbusters" (the Cinerama programmes, *Around the World in 80 Days*, *The Ten Commandments*, the big musicals and foreign location pictures, etc.). Made at a cost of over a million pounds each—a cost outside any normal range of British production—these films represent an enormous investment. By their nature they are exceptional; and their objective, in box-office terms, must be to appeal exceptionally.

2. Films made specifically and deliberately for a teenage public. In this connection, a recent American public opinion survey, backed by the Motion Picture Association of America, disclosed that 52 per cent of cinema admissions in the U.S. are now for people under 19, with a further 20 per cent for the under-thirties. It is the desire to hold and attract this audience which explains the flood of rock'n'roll and horror pictures, whose British counterparts are *Dracula* and *The Curse of Frankenstein*, *The Tommy Steele Story* and *Six-Five Special*.

3. An increasing number of films, often independently produced, which set out to break new ground in subject or treatment. Here the recent relaxation of the Production Code has a special relevance. Pictures like *Bachelor Party* and *End As a Man*, *No Down Payment* and *A Hatful of Rain*, are all taking advantage of the new public temper; in Britain, they all received 'X' certificates. Because television, regarding itself as a family entertainment, imposes a fairly strict self-censorship, a freer cinema has its obvious attractions. Since films of this sort are mostly made relatively cheaply,

*Former film studios . . . : Ealing is now occupied by BBC Television, Denham by the American Air Force.*

they may be able to recoup their costs without attracting a mass public.

A corollary to all this seems to be a significant decline in the drawing power of the "average entertainment picture"—the unspectacular production made at medium cost which has in the past provided American and British studios with their steadiest income. Sidney Gilliat, in a recent letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, commented that the old cinema-going habit "called for a preponderance of 'middle of the road' pictures. Today this 'middle of the road' picture is dying on its feet. . . ." This not uncommon opinion seems to represent the American lesson. There are obvious problems: very expensive pictures are ruled out for any country that has not the American home market. Relatively cheap pictures, designed for a young audience, are already more than paying their way here (*Curse of Frankenstein*, etc.); but an industry cannot be built on horror and jazz. Films concerned with live social issues are glumly dismissed by two British directors writing in a recent issue of the Film Societies' magazine *Film*. According to Guy Hamilton,"the majority of films that have tackled social problems in this country have been financial flops"; according to Ken Annakin, "you can be pretty certain that any film . . . which deals even slightly with a serious issue is bound to lose money." Both directors are equating serious subjects with dull pictures, which is precisely the attitude from which contemporary American film-makers are breaking away. And if the American example has any relevance for British studios, the middle of the road may no longer be the safest or most profitable place for a film-maker.

## *Cost of Production*

QUESTIONS OF COST, in any event, are crucial to production. No-one in his senses would suggest making a serious film about a social issue on the same financial scale as a big spectacle. There is no reason, though, why a film costing £100,000 should not do relatively as well as one costing a million; and the adjustment of means to ends becomes increasingly important as the home market contracts. One other factor should be mentioned: if British film-makers want to embark on really expensive pictures, they can most safely do so in alliance with American interests. A film like *The Bridge on the River Kwai* can hardly have been made cheaply; but it remains an economic proposition, as a purely British film on a similar scale would scarcely do, because it can be accepted in the United States as an American picture.

At any time of crisis in the cinema, there will always be people ready to claim that film-making is an unnaturally expensive and extravagant business and that the industry's problems would melt away before a reduction of costs. As a rule, these charges concern two points: First, there is the time-worn accusation that union regulations and restrictive practices inflate labour costs—"five men to work one light" is the general form of a complaint that usually seems a magnification of trivialities. Equally familiar is the charge that film stars demand and receive unrealistic salaries. Ted Willis, writing in January to *The Times*, trotted out this old hobby-horse: "It will take longer than necessary to re-establish the cinema if a small section insist on taking out more money than they are really worth, money which goes to the Chancellor anyway. . . ." The obvious solution to this, put forward by Mr. Willis, is to test the worth of the stars by involving them financially in a picture's fortunes on a system of reduced salary and a share in the profits. As a method, this encourages independent production and cuts across the contract system, the star-building and star-preserving strategies of the established studios.

On the general cost question, the National Film Finance Corporation's most recent annual report (covering the year ending March 31, 1957) provides some useful evidence. Approximately half the first features securing a circuit release are among the films part-financed by the N.F.F.C. At the same time, the statistics contained in its report cannot be taken as applying to the whole industry, since the Corporation aids a vast majority of second features and cheaply-made pictures and only a small percentage of the more expensive productions. It does not, for instance, advance finance to the Rank Organisation, whose 1958 schedule, even in its reduced form, allows for the production of twelve films at a cost of something over £3 million. During the years 1948-57, the N.F.F.C. advanced some £13 million to 374 features: of these,

175 cost less than £75,000, 139 cost between £75,000 and £175,000 and only 60 cost more than £175,000. The proportions in the various categories have not altered very significantly over the years.

The report also provides a workable indication of how production costs are broken down on the average picture. On 32 N.F.F.C.-assisted films made in the year 1956-57, studio facilities and the production company's overheads accounted on an average for 14.7 per cent of the budget, finance charges for 8.8 per cent, film and laboratory charges for 6.7 per cent. Acting remains the biggest single item, at 18 per cent, followed by production unit salaries (13 per cent), craft labour (9.4 per cent) and the producer and director's salaries (7.6 per cent) 3.9 per cent of the average budget goes on script and story.

Some revealing indications of film finance issues come in two separate sets of statistics. The first shows the number of films financially assisted by the N.F.F.C. over the years 1952-56, which made or are likely to make a profit. The total amounts to 74 out of 184 films—fractionally over 40 per cent. The report points out, however, that over the same years estimated total revenues amounted to 99 per cent of total production costs—in other words, that the films which make a profit very nearly pay for those which do not. Without the help provided by the British Film Production Fund this would not have been the case and only an estimated 76 per cent of the total production costs would have been recovered. Here, clearly, is evidence of the part which the Production Levy plays in closing the gap. Not the least of the industry's problems is the extent to which the levy itself is threatened with the decline in box-office takings.

One factor which should certainly be taken into account here is the whole question of returns from overseas. Can British films increasingly exploit overseas markets as another method of closing the gap? The general impression seems to be that returns from abroad are still rising; but, remarkable as it may seem, there are no official statistics concerning these earnings. The Board of Trade hopes later in the year to be in a position to publish the figures; until then, the question remains speculative.

The table printed below is also revealing, showing the average cost per day of actual shooting on 31 pictures aided by the N.F.F.C. during the year 1956-57. Out of these figures, one particular question seems to emerge. Are the average shooting schedules of British pictures over-long, particularly in the £75-175,000 bracket? 36 days, on a five-day week, represents a seven-week shooting schedule; 52 days amounts to 10½ weeks. Among recent American pictures, *Bachelor Party* and *Jailhouse Rock* were completed in 20-odd days; *Desire Under the Elms*, *Stage Struck*, *A Hatful of Rain* and *The Pajama Game* in fewer than 40 days; *No Down Payment* and *Wild is the Wind* in 40-odd days.

## *Production and Government Aid*

IN AMERICA, a major development during the past few years has been the immense increase in independent production, which now accounts for almost half the American film output. *Around the World in 80 Days*, *The Pride and the Passion* and *A Face in the Crowd* were among last year's independent productions; so were *A Man is Ten Feet Tall* and *Bachelor Party*, *Paths of Glory* and *12 Angry Men*. One of the great Hollywood post-war success stories has been that of the Hecht-Hill-Lancaster company. Equally notable is the advance of United Artists, which does not itself engage in production, owns no studios, but acts as a sort of clearing-house for the independents.

This situation has arisen in America for half a dozen reasons. Perhaps the most significant is the curtailment of production by the major studios, in part a consequence of the anti-trust actions which some years ago resulted in a divorce between theatre ownership and studio operations. In the past, the major companies, as both producers and exhibitors, had an obligation to provide a steady flow of product for their own theatres. Now, studios are ready to rent space to the independents, who benefit by reduced overheads and lower operational costs. Also, according to a recent article by Hollis Alpert in the *Saturday Review of Literature*: "The big sources of money—like New York banks—are still interested in movies as an investment and not at all unwilling to finance

AVERAGE SCREEN-TIME AND COSTS PER CAMERA DAY

*Films financially assisted by the N.F.F.C. begun and finished in the year ending March 31, 1957.*

| **Films costing** .. .. .. .. | £20,000-£75,000 | £75,000-£125,000 | £125,000-£175,000 | Over £175,000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of films** .. .. .. | 13 | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| **Average screen time** .. .. .. | 81 mins. | 89 mins. | 93 mins. | 97 mins. |
| **Average number of camera days** .. | 23 | 36 | 52 | 62 |
| **Average screen time per camera day** | 3 min. 31 sec. | 2 min. 27 sec. | 1 min. 47 sec. | 1 min. 33 sec. |
| **Average cost per camera day** .. | £1,593 | £2,768 | £2,902 | £3,693 |

Source: N.F.F.C. Report, 1957.

an independent they have faith in. For example, the Bankers Trust Company of New York has a vice-president, Herbert Golden. . . . in charge of a special department devoted to movie investment. . . . Mr. Golden's job is to assess all sorts of intangibles like personality, talent, daring, the record of the producers, the stars they've signed, the projected cost and projected audience of a film. . . . Golden's bank arranged much of the financing for *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Marty*, *The Vikings* and *Paths of Glory*—all movies different from each other, and each in its own way quite different from the old studio format."

The recession in America will clearly make money tighter; but the financing position still remains a good deal more encouraging than that in Britain, even without a 7 per cent Bank Rate. Here the independent producer is handicapped partly by the smaller size of the home market, which makes his operations even more of a gamble, partly by the domination of the three major circuits (A.B.C. and the Rank Organisation's Odeon and Gaumont), all directly linked with established production interests. It is generally accepted that a first feature which does not secure a circuit booking will have difficulty in recovering its costs; and a distribution guarantee remains the first essential before money can be raised for a film. Nevertheless, there is considerable feeling in sections of the industry that the future may lie increasingly with the independents. Sidney Gilliat, in his letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, commented: "I have always believed that big centrally directed production organisations, supported by costly service departments, are simply not suited to the film industry in this country. Decentralisation on the Hollywood lines would both reduce costs and improve quality."

More recently, five producers representing three independent companies—Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat, John and Roy Boulting and John Woolf—have been appointed to the Board of British Lion. What this means in practice remains to be seen; in theory, it should represent a limited but significant move towards strengthening the position of the independent producer. Since the new British Lion company began operating just over three years ago, with capital invested by the N.F.F.C., it has been making modest profits. But the chairman, Mr. David Collins, has estimated a loss during the financial year just ended. British Lion's policy remains the encouragement of independent film-making: its financial position at present, though, can scarcely be such as to encourage experimental risks or major expansion.

A good deal of Government action in recent years has been directed towards assisting the producer. The Production Fund exists to channel a proportion of box-office takings directly back to this side of the industry; the N.F.F.C. exists to provide financial assistance. The 1957 Cinematograph Films Act extended the Corporation's lending powers for a further ten years. To quote again from its Annual Report: "The new Act does not increase the Corporation's financial resources, nor does it deal with the question of past losses and interest thereon. The restriction against lending 'if financial facilities can be obtained on reasonable terms from an appropriate source' has been removed, and the Corporation has had placed upon it the duty to pay its way. In other words, the Corporation is not to be regarded as a disguised subsidy to the industry but rather as a specialised bank."

The Corporation, during its years of operation, has advanced some £14 million—including the famous £3 million loan to the old British Lion company. Its net deficiency, at March 31, 1957, amounted to just over £3½ million, of which £2,665,531 represented the consequences of the British Lion transaction. This loan, which failed in its objective of propping up a very shaky structure, amounted to half the Corporation's £6 million resources. Otherwise, it is not failing to pay its way and has achieved the objective of sustaining the volume of production in Britain—which in turn means achieving an obvious Government objective in sustaining employment within the industry.

The time might come, however, when this was no longer enough. Is there, then, a case for Government aid determined on a qualitative as well as a quantitative basis? In this connection, it is interesting that it is now for the first time possible to read the memorandum on the film industry which Paul Rotha drew up in 1945 at Sir Stafford Cripps' invitation and has recently published in his book *Rotha on the Film*. His proposal then was for a Corporation which would "provide financial and studio facilities to makers of independent feature and documentary films, and secure proper distribution for such films in the United Kingdom."

Rotha envisaged a Corporation which would maintain a studio, to be rented out to independents, and might itself

## Distribution of box-office receipts

GREAT BRITAIN, 1955*

| | £000's | | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gross receipts .. | 105,830 | | 100.0 |
| Entertainments tax .. .. | 33,425 | | 31.6 |
| British Film Production Fund | 2,650 | | 2.5 |
| *Net receipts remaining* .. | 69,755 | | 65.9 |
| Exhibitors' share after paying film hire .. .. | 45,290 | | 42.8 |
| *Amount for division between renters and producers* .. .. | 24,465 | | 23.1 |
| Amount paid for newsreels and 16mm. films shown in cinemas | 368 | | 0.3 |
| Direct distribution expenses .. | 4,532 | | 4.3 |
| Distributors' share .. .. | 4,247 | | 4.0 |
| *Amount remaining for producers* | 15,318 | | 14.5 |
| Amount paid to producers of foreign films .. | 10,780 | | 10.2 |
| Amount paid to British producers of films under 3,000 ft. | 172 | plus 2,650 from B.F.P.F. | 0.2 plus 2.5 from B.F.P.F. |
| Of films over 3.000 ft. | 4,366 | | 4.1 |

* These are the most recent statistics available showing the share-out of box-office receipts. Apart from the reduction of Entertainments Tax, the relative proportions have probably not greatly changed since 1955.

initiate production "according to the needs of the Government information services" and encourage experimental work. Similarly, he suggested that it should "safeguard and develop the economic security of the independent documentary units" and "establish a planned system of production for documentary." A further part of his project was the establishment of a Training and Apprenticeship system for both branches of the industry. Rotha's scheme for distribution involved bringing a proportion of the country's cinemas under Corporation control. He suggested that the Corporation should acquire about 500 cinemas, averaging 750 seats each and strategically sited in towns with not less than 50,000 inhabitants. Here, Corporation-backed films should have priority, together with Continental productions and on occasion "American films not considered by the trade to be of wide appeal. . . . Programmes need not be restricted to a week's booking, but permitted to run as long as economically justified."

Rotha's project involves acceptance of two ideas. First, that something on the lines of an 'art house' circuit would fill a need and could be made to pay its way. Second, and more fundamental, that a sector of the industry, both production and exhibition, should come under public control. The Corporation, as he saw it, would presumably have become a sort of BBC of the cinema. Variations on this comprehensive scheme—in particular, the elusive Fourth Circuit idea—have been put forward on numerous occasions. Thirteen years ago, with the cinemas doing a booming trade, anything that smelt of nationalisation was bound to encounter fierce hostility. It is worth noting that now, with cinemas everywhere closing down, the actual acquisition of theatres would presumably present much less of a problem. In the years between, though, we have had the sad case of Group 3's failure to establish itself, to make films of sufficient individuality or to uncover the kind of talent needed to sustain a vigorous production programme. Paul Rotha's plan, in any case, rests on one fundamental assumption: that the cinema, as much as radio or television, has the responsibility of the power it exercises, as a public information service, a reflector and creator of opinion; and that its fortunes are therefore a matter of special public concern. In the present state of the cinema's affairs, this remains a question to be faced; and the comparison with BBC television is not an unrealistic one.

State aid can take less far-reaching forms, and it is worth looking into the actions taken by the French Government to encourage 'quality' film-making. In France, there is a cinema admission tax similar to British Entertainments Tax, and a duty (calculated by footage) on all films shown. Part of the proceeds is devoted to encouraging the production of films, "of such a nature that they will serve the cause of the French cinema, or open up new perspectives in cinematographic art, or make known the great themes and problems of 'l'Union francaise'." This is achieved through a system known as the "primes à la qualité". In the case of feature productions, grants amounting to not less than 15 million francs are made to films considered specially deserving, the decisions being taken by a jury whose members include Marcel Achard, Georges Auric, Abel Gance, Henri Langlois (director of the Cinémathèque française), André Maurois, Marcel Pagnol, Françoise Rosay and the critic and historian Georges Sadoul. In the past two years, grants totalling 763 million francs have been made to 35 features, including *Un Condamné a Mort s'est Echappé* (50 million), *Gervaise* (50 million), *Celui qui doit Mourir* (40), *Porte des Lilas* (35), *Le Mystère Picasso* (30) and *Les Sorcières de Salem* (20). A film made for about 100 million francs (approximately the average French production cost) is therefore in a position to recoup a third or more of its costs by this means. With films likely in any case to be profitable, such aid seems otiose; with others, such as Bresson's film, it can be all-important. In any case, such a system can operate as a guarantee against loss, as well as a sort of subsidy paid by commerce to art.

The system probably plays a more positive part in maintaining the quality of documentary production. The jury here is made up of official and ministry representatives, three critics, three short film directors and three producers. They are authorised to give a maximum of 80 awards. In July, 1957, a list of "primes" was published, headed by Edmond Sechan's *Niok* (8½ million) and including Fabiani's *Tu Enfanteras sans Douleur* (7½ million), Rouquier's *Arthur Honegger* (6 million) and *Lourdes et ses Miracles* (5 million), Franju's *A Propos d'une Rivière* and *Notre Dame* (4 million each) and the Marcel Marceau *Pantomimes* (1½ million).

A similar system exists in Italy; and there seems no doubt that it encourages documentary production more adventurous than is usually financially practicable in Britain. Here is a form of subsidy relatively cheap to operate, but acting as a positive incentive to quality. Again, a fundamental assumption lies behind it: that it is in the national interest to ensure an advancing rather than a 'middle of the road' cinema, and that if necessary this policy must be firmly backed up with cash.

## *Exhibition*

AS FAR AS THE exhibition side of the industry is concerned, attention remains concentrated, as it has been for some years, on the problem of Entertainments Tax. The relief given in the 1957 Budget did little to ease the situation. In 1956, £33.9 million (or 32.5 per cent of the cinemas' gross box-office takings) went in tax; during the financial year just ended, tax still ran at a little under 30 per cent of the gross takings. In 1957, the industry asked for £21 million in tax relief and obtained £6.5 million. This year, the All Industry Tax Committee for the first time presented a case for total abolition, on the grounds that, "if the present trend of admissions continues, total abolition can alone prevent the collapse of the British film industry." The Committee forecast further closing down of cinemas (estimating that a quarter were operating at a loss) and stressed the necessity to maintain or increase the Production Fund; it made the point that "the continuance of Entertainments Tax on cinemas alone when all other forms of entertainment have been freed is unfair and discriminatory"; and it reiterated the dangers of television competition, with the remarkable estimate that "100 admissions per annum are lost to the cinema for every new licence holder." Over a year ago, Duncan Crow wrote in SIGHT AND SOUND: "all the arguments for reducing Entertainments Tax have been made time and time again. It is only Government action that can help now." This situation remains; and the present problems dramatically reinforce what was already a powerful case.

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OPPOSITE PAGE: some British production trends.
*Top left:* revival of the costume picture. Melina Mercouri and Keith Michell in *The Gipsy and the Gentleman*, directed by Joseph Losey.
*Top right:* the fashion in horror. A scene from *Quatermass II*.
*Below:* the contemporary scene. A rock'n'roll sequence from *Violent Playground*, Basil Dearden's film about juvenile crime in Liverpool.

*Shock tactics: audiences queue in the Tottenham Court Road for a horror film.*

Now that the theatre and sport have been freed from tax—and from a tax paid on receipts and not on profits—the industry's arguments appear unanswerable. No Entertainments Tax is paid by the spectator at a race meeting or a football match; nothing extra is paid by the man who switches on his television set to watch a feature film. But cinemas which might otherwise survive are being shut down because tax converts a small profit into a significant loss. While other arts are in receipt of subsidy, the cinema receives a little assistance and a good deal of discouragement; and whatever the industry's other problems, tax relief remains the most immediate.

Not infrequently, though, one has the impression that substantial tax relief is regarded by the trade as something in the nature of a magic talisman, that it has become so deeply involved in this particular battle that victory has become almost an end in itself. Even if tax were abolished, the cinema would still be confronted with its dwindling public, with the problem of how to retool its exhibition policy realistically to meet new audience demands. There is no longer a seller's market; but in its day-to-day techniques of presentation and exploitation the cinema still gives the appearance of existing optimistically in the past, in the days when queues stood loyally outside for the 1/9's and the cold winds of adversity had not begun to whistle through the half-empty stalls.

Discussion about the conditions in which films are actually shown is not very profitable. There will always be a faction demanding a ban on smoking, bookable seats, and a programme made up of a single feature plus shorts. A larger and less articulate section of the public probably prefers the opportunity to smoke, the occasional hazards of the queue, and the traditional double-feature. For everyone who is irritated by the ice-cream selling intervals, there will be someone else who enjoys the opportunity to chew his way through the feature. And so on. The cinema has always chosen to go along with the big battalions, to satisfy the needs of the mass public on whom it has been able to rely. Can it still afford, though, to antagonise or disregard its more selective audience? Significantly, there is no evidence of a falling-off in the existing 'minority' public, notably the audience for Continental pictures (not entirely those dependent on 'X' trickery) and the more stimulating re-issues. People drawn to the cinema by genuine interest in the film on the whole remain loyal: the casual audience makes up the great army of deserters.

More fundamental than the problems of ice-cream, smoking and the profitability or otherwise of advertising shorts, are the major questions of exhibition policy. One of the smaller circuits, Granada, broke the old one-film-a-week rule some time ago with *The King and I* and did very well out of its enterprise. The Rank Organisation recently experimented with *The Bolshoi Ballet*, shown in an approximation to theatre conditions; and the Cinerama films and *Around the World in 80 Days* are screened as special programmes. Companies are increasingly prepared to make exceptional efforts in promoting what they regard as exceptional pictures. How soon, though, will the exceptional effort have to become more or less standard practice? A small-scale film, made with a minority public in mind, can be killed if subjected to showing in a chain of large cinemas. A big production, on the other hand, may be 'roadshown'—given extended runs in selected large cinemas. Another recent American experiment is that of 'saturation' booking, by which a film is shown in numerous cinemas simultaneously, before the impact of the initial selling campaign has worn off. These are not just technical adjustments within the film trade: they add up to a radical change in the whole framework of exhibition, a realisation that selling techniques must be flexible, imaginatively adjusted to the film and its potential public.

At the moment, there seems little doubt that this country has too many cinemas for any existing audience. The difficulties arise with their location. If a village cinema shuts down, for instance, it does not necessarily mean that the audience will cheerfully transfer itself to the nearest town; more probably, with transport problems to face, it will simply abandon the cinema altogether. So the solution which at first sounds most rational—a range of big cinemas in the major population centres, reinforced by small cinemas showing programmes adjusted to local taste and demand—may be unworkable in practice.

Meanwhile cinemas continue to close, and the *Financial Times* has recently investigated what actually happens to them. Many, it appears, simply remain empty and idle: "a difficulty which frequently arises is that, under the Town and Country Planning Act, these buildings are zoned for entertainment, and many local authorities have the reputation of not being very helpful where a change in use is envisaged." Others have been transformed into shops, showrooms and filling stations; and four cinemas still under Rank control in the North and Midlands are among those converted into dance-halls. The *Financial Times* article ends sardonically: "In Newcastle upon Tyne, two cinemas are coming down as a result of town planning. Many cinema owners are reported to wish for more plans of this nature."

## *Cinema and Television*

AS CINEMAS SHUT DOWN, the industry stiffens its own hostility to television. Not that relations between the two competitors can be entirely clear-cut: two circuits, Granada and A.B.C., are themselves actively engaged in television, and the Rank Organisation will join them as soon as the Isle of Wight transmitter comes into operation.

All the same, the five main industry associations came together early in February with a plan designed to check the flow of feature films to television. Their scheme came after months of proposals and counter-proposals, suggestions that a cinema boycott should be imposed on any producer who disposed of his old pictures to TV, suggestions in letters to the trade press that Margaret Lockwood had acted 'treacherously' in appearing on television to advertise the TV showing of an old feature, defensive statements that the old films had in any case lost their entertainment value, and

counter-statements that the showing of an exceptionally popular film, such as *The Seventh Veil*, brought a disastrous 15 per cent drop in box-office takings.

Altogether, the film trade seems convinced that old pictures amount to one of television's more substantial attractions; and there is a certain stab-in-the-back element about the whole situation which causes feelings to run high. The trade associations' scheme is purely defensive. It calls for a farthing levy on cinema admissions, to be paid by the exhibitors; out of the proceeds a 'defence fund', initially estimated at £500,000, will be established, to buy up features which would otherwise go to television. The associations also state that: "If any producer or distributor enters into a contract . . . to allow any cinema feature film, either British or imported, to be shown on television in the United Kingdom, exhibitors will not book any films from that producer or distributor." It is apparently assumed that within about 18 months the BBC and ITV will have worked their way through their existing backlog of pictures, and that enough of the films likely to be acquired for TV remain in the hands of the original distributors for the scheme to be workable. (The BBC, for instance, did not acquire the RKO features from RKO-Radio itself, but from an American concern to whom the films had already been sold.)

This plan to freeze the supply of features to television has obvious hazards to negotiate. It may or may not be effective; and, in any event, it marks a decision to mend a dyke already sizeably holed. At the time of writing, BBC and ITV are in cut-throat competition with each other and the cinemas on two Saturdays out of every four, with rival features on both channels. Throughout last winter, television in fact acted as a kind of cinema repertory; and from the audience point of view this has simply become part of the changing pattern of entertainment. The industry's decision to take a defensive stand against a genuine threat to its interests is understandable enough. But the move in itself marks a kind of retreat, an attempt to restore the *status quo*, to disregard the fact that another market now exists and also to leave out of account the taste of the audience. It is presumably because these films are proving popular that the supply is to be cut off.

With the cinema armed and on the defensive against television, we come back as it were to the beginning, to the question of attitudes. And the final question, which in a survey of this kind can only be put speculatively, *as* a question, is whether our whole attitude to the cinema in this country is not over-defensive, whether the cinema's battles are not being fought on too narrow a front as a succession of mainly defensive manoeuvres. In its leader on the crisis, "A Time for New Ideas", *The Times* criticised the cinema in somewhat general terms: "There is fairly wide agreement that films must be in some way better—more adult, more substantial in content, perhaps less escapist. . . . Those who make and those who show films should be more strongly concerned with their occupation as an art, think less of it as a mass-production industry." Television, the article pointed out, "is still in the early, expansive stage, attracting customers and contributors by novelty. The cinema is far beyond this, in the stage of dull routine. . . ." The defence of art drew a scornful comment from one of the trade papers: "To suggest that the cinema should appeal only to a special audience is as absurd as it would be to criticise the detergent makers for ignoring the claims of those who prefer soap in cakes." The defensive assumption, again, is that films "more substantial in content" are necessarily so boring that only specialised audiences will put up with them.

*Close down: the little Regal Cinema, Penzance, one of many cinemas forced out of business.*

*The Times*' solution is in any case only a partial answer, or an answer that disregards some of the main problems. The 'mass-production' industry has made films for a mass public, and it is not this mass audience which would be recovered, or recovered immediately, by the production of films "more substantial in content". How far, though with the decline in its mass public, should the cinema be prepared to look elsewhere? Record companies, for instance, can subsidise the production of classical records in part through the profit from popular best-sellers, and can usually count, in the long run, on recovering their outlay. The cinema does this occasionally, but to embark on any deliberate cultivation of a minority public, with a view to long-term returns, it needs a thoroughly co-ordinated production policy and a method of distribution and exhibition which gives the more specialised film a fair chance. In any case, the production of minority films is in itself no solution: a living cinema must be in touch with people at all levels. But there remains another public to explore, in the large potential audience who have never gone regularly to the cinema or have abandoned the habit. Who are they, what might they want from the cinema? No-one really knows, because one of the great gaps in our knowledge is the sociology of the audience, the question of what the cinema means, has meant and might mean to its public. It is ten years since the Central Office of Information published its useful survey of cinema audiences, now seriously out of date. The cinema needs to know its audience, both actual and potential; and it needs to be alert to change, to shifts in taste and opinion. A defensive policy can finally amount only to a series of rearguard actions. An advancing cinema, and in the long run probably a commercially healthy cinema, is one which respects its artists, allowing them freedom of personal expression, and respects its audience. This is why the problems at stake are not finally economic and why they are not simply the concern of the industry: they concern us all.

*Quince rehearses his troupe in a scene from Jiri Trnka's "A Midsummer Night's Dream".*

# In the Picture

## Fantasy in Prague

BERNARD ORNA *writes:* A new Gulliver: for a moment I fancied myself one, as I stood in the vaulted lower room of an old house in Prague, Jiri Trnka's puppet film studio. Under glowing coloured lights, five scenes from a world of fantasy were coming to life, a world peopled by baroque creatures, a foot high, acting out Shakespeare. The play is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in whose presentation, as a great, ballet-like masque, the screen size will vary from ordinary to wide according to the content of scenes. The puppets look wonderfully "translated", the setting richly detailed: baroque is the description that at once springs to mind.

From one world of fantasy to another—in 19th century Gothic style. Karel Zeman, also a master of animated film, has just completed an adaptation of a Jules Verne story, explosive with trick work in which live action, puppetry and drawing are merged. A worthy professor discovers a source of enormous energy. Unscrupulous men seize him, to steal his secret and use it for their own ends—world domination—but they are thwarted and lose all in a final disaster. Zeman has added dashes of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, some inventions of his own and a touch of mocking humour to make *An Invention of Destruction.* There are sailors with striped shirts and cutlasses, gentlemen in top hats, mustachios and steam cars, elaborate flying machines, and a spacious submarine whose crew ride out on sea-cycles to squabble over treasure. With the decorative wrought-iron machinery, the castellated buildings and the black and white of steel engravings, this is a curious and distinctive, if not wholly satisfying, tribute to Verne.

In my luggage on this trip were two cartoon set-ups from John Halas' *History of the Cinema*, appropriately destined for a Prague exhibition concerning the history of British cinema; more specifically, a reflection of the popularity of films from this country in Czechoslovakia. The idea came from the director of the Film Museum, where the exhibition was held, and its realisation was made possible by the help of individuals and organisations in Britain. Feature, documentary, educational, animated and children's films were represented, the development of British cinema being traced out through stills, posters, drawings and three-dimensional displays. There were tributes to Chaplin and Olivier, and the exhibition hall echoed jauntily to music from *Genevieve* and *Doctor at Sea.*

## Italian Notes

ROBERT HAWKINS *writes:* The film scene here is at present somewhat bleak, as no top Italian director is currently working on a picture. Visconti has again directed his attention to the legitimate stage; de Sica is busy as a screen actor (so once more delaying his joint project with Zavattini, no longer called *Giudizio Universale* but *Ore 18*); Rossellini continues his travels, with no indication as to when one will see the fruit of his Indian labours; Antonioni is still savouring the generally excellent comments on his recently released *Il Grido*, and has at present no definite plans; and Pietro Germi is awaiting the showing—probably at one of the festivals—of his *L'Uomo di Paglia* (*The Straw Man*), in which he himself plays the lead. Also due for release is Eduardo de Filippo's *Fortunella*, awaited with special interest since it features Giulietta Masina in one of the few performances not directed by her husband, Federico Fellini. Paul Douglas plays opposite her.

The near future will see Fred Zinnemann (*The Nun's Story*), Henry Koster (*The Naked Maja*), William Wyler (*Ben Hur*) and King Vidor (*Solomon and Sheba*) busy in Rome studios on basically American projects. Few Italian producers have planned, or have been able to plan, productions of similar scope. An exception is Dino de Laurentiis, who continues in his worthy policy of balancing films of obviously commercial intent with others of (potential) artistic distinction. His company's plans include a project by Alberto Lattuada, based partly on Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* and as yet untitled, to be filmed in Yugoslavia and Rome with Van Heflin and Silvana Mangano; *Grand Tour*, to be directed

by René Clement in France, possibly with Marilyn Monroe; Fellini's *A Trip with Anita*, which the director is regretfully recasting, since Sophia Loren, whom he wanted for the title role, is for personal reasons unable to work in Italy; and the "giant" *His Name Was Bolivar*, a $10,000,000 extravaganza involving South and North American financial interests and, at least at the time of writing, Marlon Brando.

## Scandinavian Notes

ERIK ULRICHSEN *writes: Jungle Saga* (*En Djungelsaga*), Arne Sucksdorff's second full-length film and his first in colour and CinemaScope (Agascope to be exact) is exceptionally beautiful. Technically and as a living painting it is superb. The new screen shape does not seem at all to have worried Sucksdorff and his small unit, and at his first attempt the director proves himself one of the world's finest colour photographers. Some silhouette sequences in black and dark blue are breathtaking.

The opponents of Sucksdorff's drama are a leopard and the inhabitants of a small Indian village. A young hunter named Ginju shoots a tiger, but this act is thought to be evil, and he is expelled from the village. In the end, however, it is Ginju who kills the leopard—the symbol of Nature's malice. He dies fighting the wild animal. No doubt the villagers will regard this as a necessary sacrifice to the Gods; and perhaps Sucksdorff wants to explain how primitive myths survive. At any rate, Sucksdorff concentrates more than before on human beings. I do not think, though, that he really penetrates the strange world of the jungle people; and in only two or three sequences do we feel the sense of wonder and poetic intensity that marked his finest film, *The Wind and the River*. But *Jungle Saga* remains a film to see several times before arriving at a final judgment. Its pantheistic conception has grandeur.

Ingmar Bergman's new film *Wild Strawberries* (*Smultronstället*) is a mixture of symbolic dream sequences and realism and marks a return to his earlier style. Bergman tries to give us a portrait of a guilt-ridden, egotistical old doctor (played by Victor Sjöström, the great Swedish silent director). But the man scarcely comes alive and the minor parts are mostly caricatures. In some passages, Bergman brings past and present together after the manner of Sjöberg in *Miss Julie*.

The latest Danish films have all been provincial, but there is some hope for the future. The documentary director Jørgen Roos has made his first feature film and other young directors are being given chances. At Nordisk, the director and producer Erik Balling is trying to train five of the better-known Danish novelists to write for the cinema.

## Hollywood Report

ALBERT JOHNSON *writes:* Since *Three Coins in the Fountain*, 20th Century-Fox have specialised in the combination of the travelogue and light dramatic concoction. Now Darryl F. Zanuck has embarked for Fox release on *De Luxe Tour*, a mammoth production which seems likely to be one of the most expensive films ever made. It will be a world tour of places off the usual tourist tracks, with emphasis upon some of the rarer sights. Highly advanced camera techniques are being utilised in the CinemaScope 55 medium, so that weather problems will not affect the camera quality; and two cameras are installed in the front of a glass-nosed B-25 bomber, to give audiences impressions of landing at 600 miles an hour. Iceland, Greenland, Lapland, the Middle East and the Belgian Congo have already been visited for the film, which will be seen towards the end of the year in specially equipped cinemas.

The irrepressible Mr. Goldwyn has purchased the screen rights to *Porgy and Bess*, the George Gershwin-DuBose Heyward musical. All-Negro musical films have not up to the present been altogether satisfactory, due partly to some long outdated restrictions in the Motion Picture Code itself. But it is important that this particular work, at least, should escape the sham artiness of *Carmen Jones* and deal more realistically with the American Negro life and temperament. Goldwyn has already run into some difficulties. Sidney Poitier, a non-singer, was asked to play Porgy; but the actor did not apparently approve of certain aspects of the script and the producer is not agreeable towards making any changes. Once again, however, voices are to be dubbed in for the principal roles. At last report, Dorothy Dandridge had been signed for the part of Bess.

Richard Brooks, whose latest film for M-G-M is *The Brothers Karamazov*, has now undertaken the job of adapting and directing Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, with Lawrence Weingarten as producer. According to an article in the *New York Times*, Brooks intends to film the play in black-and-white, and on a regular size screen. The major problem, of course, is the playwright's treatment of submerged homosexuality in the character of the ex-college athlete. However, as Brooks puts it, he hopes to "provide the kind of resolution" that the author and Elia Kazan sought in the original stage play. If all goes according to plan, Elizabeth Taylor, Burl Ives and Mildred Dunnock will play leading parts, with Paul Newman as the controversial athlete.

Other projects recently announced include two for United Artists release. Bryna Productions have purchased *I Stole $16,000,000*, the story of a safe-cracker, to be directed by Stanley Kubrick with James Harris as producer. United Artists also announce that Dore Schary will produce three films for distribution over a two-year period. The first will be *The Gravy Train*, a contemporary story set in several American cities. From Columbia there is talk about a film based on the career of Boris Morros, the film industry entrepreneur who was also a spy-figure. Louis de Rochemont will produce, with Mr. Morros acting as technical adviser.

## Robert Aldrich in Berlin

GENE MOSKOWITZ *writes:* There was mild tension in the air when I entered a bare sound stage in the West Berlin UFA studios—the tension usually found at the beginning of work on a film. In the centre of the stage, at the head of a long, green felt-covered table lit by three overhead floodlights, the American director Robert Aldrich was sitting, flanked by his stars, Martine Carol, Jack Palance and Jeff Chandler, and others of his cast. This was the beginning of a two-week rehearsal period, which opened with two days of script readings. Tentatively titled *The Phoenix*, Aldrich's new film is being produced by an English company, Hammer Films, with some American participation via Seven Arts Films and world-wide distribution by United Artists.

Aldrich and one of his writers, Dave Chapin, adapted the story from a novel by the American writer Lawrence Bachmann. It concerns six German soldiers returning after the war to a shattered Berlin. Since all are demolition experts, they take over a bomb

*Sophia Loren and Burl Ives in "Desire Under the Elms."*

disposal unit to defuse the many unexploded bombs still lying in the city's ruins. Among the six are Aldrich's usual hero and anti-hero. The hero (Jack Palance) is a hurt man who has withdrawn into himself: unable to love, he still retains his humanity and respect for others. The anti-hero (Jeff Chandler) is cynical, self-absorbed, ready to sacrifice anything and anyone in the interest of his own survival. During a break Aldrich told me that his general theme was intended to denote the differences between the totalitarian way of life and the democratic way. He made it clear that his selfish anti-hero had to be understood, and even admired for some of his attributes, before he could be fought. The hero achieves self-realisation, the most promising note in any of Aldrich's personal films to date (*The Big Knife*, *Vera Cruz*, *Attack!*). The anti-hero breaks his own code and eventually dies by his own hand.

The director has never been in Germany before and said that he would not try to make a film of specifically German character, since he felt he did not know the country well enough. He was more interested in his film's central conflicts, which he feels are universal. Since all the Germans are being played by Americans, he thought the film would be homogeneous in tone. Martine Carol plays the French widow of a German soldier, and the only English role is played by Richard Wattis. The actors all seemed to feel that Aldrich's thorough rehearsal method gave them a chance to get a more complete idea of their characters. It was specially useful for Miss Carol, who was somewhat self-conscious about her English.

Aldrich said that he was not one of those directors who could arrive at a set or location and immediately place his cameras: he had to know them completely before he could work easily. His methods, he said, proved more economical and did not mean that there was no leeway for change and improvisation once shooting started. The readings also helped him to develop dialogue changes, for he had a taste for flowery and literary language in his scripts. Aldrich claimed that the lot of an independent producer was difficult, since the major studios still had access to the important star names which counted when production money was being raised. He felt, though, that the changing film scene in America offered opportunities, and was optimistic about the rise of new young American directors with something to say about man's place in society.

Aldrich's own plans, after his present film, include a picture to be made for another British producer, Raymond Stross, in Greece. Called *The Angry Hills*, this is primarily an action film, the story of a carefree American (Robert Mitchum) who finds a sense of responsibility when he is caught in Athens in the early days of the war. He will then make a film in Paris for his own company: a Resistance story, to be called *The Undefeated*. Aldrich still also hopes to do an American-Russian co-production based on Gogol's *Taras Bulba*, his preferred hero.

*Jack Palance (left) and Robert Aldrich on location in Berlin during filming on "The Phoenix".*

## Paris Flashes

LOUIS MARCORELLES *writes:* Two recent incidents have shown how sensitive a section of French public opinion is at the moment to certain political allusions. *Tamango*, a Franco-German co-production in colour and CinemaScope, directed by the American John Berry and starring Dorothy Dandridge, Curd Jurgens and Jean Servais, is a fairly free adaptation of a short story by Prosper Mérimée set in the early part of the 19th century and having a slave-trading theme. The film has been refused a "visa d'exploitation" for showing in French territories overseas, presumably because of the clearly revolutionary implications of certain scenes. *La Déroute*, a short film made by Ado Kyrou under the supervision of Georges Franju, has moments which brilliantly capture the desolate atmosphere of the fair now permanently installed in the present village of Waterloo. When the film was first shown on the Champs Elysées, a section of the audience protested; it is still running in Paris, but seems likely to be withdrawn from distribution in the provinces.

Roger Pigaut, well-known as an actor, has recently realised an early ambition to direct a film. Pooling resources with two friends, Betsy Blair and Serge Reggiani, he has founded his own company, Garance Films (from the name of Arletty's character in *Les Enfants du Paradis*), and has just completed his first picture, *Le Cerf-Volant du Bout du Monde*. Three children from Montmartre come one day upon a kite which has been sent up by a Chinese boy in Pekin. They go in a dream to the other side of the world, seeking this unknown little Chinaman. "The only films we see on our screens are *noirs* or sexy," says Pigaut, "I wanted to make a pleasant film." Most of his picture was shot in Pekin, under the supervision of Pierre Prévert and with Eastman Colour camerawork by Henri Alekan. The first Franco-Chinese co-production, *Le Cerf-Volant du Bout du Monde* will be premiered in Pekin on June 1, the day of the children's holiday, and will probably be shown in the Anglo-Saxon countries during the Christmas holidays.

## £1,000 Script

UNDER THE AUSPICES of the Johan H. Smit Foundation of New York, the British Film Institute has recently announced a film script competition. The theme is peace and international understanding; the prize is £1,000. Mary Field, Anthony Asquith and Michael Redgrave have been nominated by the Institute as judges; their task is to "select that script which, if filmed, would in their opinion be best calculated to promote international confidence, understanding and tolerance". Believing that the film should aim to reach "a mass audience including young people", Mr. Smit himself suggests that the script, "should not be unduly gloomy or without hope, nor need it over-emphasise the horrors of war". There is no guarantee that the prize-winning script will in fact be filmed, though it may be submitted to production companies for consideration.

Mr. Smit, a diamond merchant, was at Spionkop and Ladysmith during the Boer War, worked with the Dutch Underground during the Second World War, and is now an American citizen. He has done considerable philanthropic work with young people; and has also sponsored a similar script competition in the Netherlands. The closing date for entries in the British competition is October 31, 1958; anyone interested can obtain further details from the Secretary, the British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2.

Jean Harlow in "Reckless".

# conversation with ROGER EDENS

*recorded by*

*ALBERT JOHNSON*

*FOR almost twenty-five years Roger Edens has been one of the creative figures behind the scenes of the Hollywood musical. Among the films on which he worked for M-G-M, as song writer, vocal arranger and music supervisor, were "Broadway Melody of 1936", most of the Judy Garland pictures, "Ziegfeld Follies" and "On The Town", for which he wrote the additional music used in the screen version. For another studio, Paramount, he last year produced "Funny Face" and himself wrote the "Bonjour Paris" number, with its echoes of "On The Town". He has seen the Hollywood musical through its transition from a showcase for prancing chorines to an altogether more sophisticated entertainment; but in spite of his considerable influence over these years on the changing styles of the musical, Edens himself remains a relatively unknown quantity, one of the creative talents little known outside the film-makers' inner circle.*

*Quiet, composed and urbane, with a slight Southern drawl, Roger Edens now occupies a tasteful and luxurious office at M-G-M, with a vast grand piano in the corner and Japanese prints around the walls. His career began, however, in the late twenties, as an accompanist to the ballroom dancers Tony and Renee De Marco. Later he was given a job as rehearsal pianist to the Gershwin show "Girl Crazy"; and soon he was Ethel Merman's accompanist in a pit orchestra that included the two Dorseys, Glenn Miller, Jack Teagarden, Gene Krupa and Harry James. "It was fantastic", he says, "the sounds we made."*

*Edens' association with the cinema began in 1933, when he went to Hollywood to work in the music department of M-G-M. At that time the company were not very enthusiastic about musicals, the field being principally dominated by Warners' big spectacular Busby Berkeley pictures:—*

## *Movies, Metro and Musicals*

My first musical job was on a Jean Harlow picture called *Reckless*. I was musical supervisor—the person who, from the inception of the script, decides how to insert music into it. My first sequence for *Reckless* was an adaptation of the title song for Harlow; and I tried to tell the whole thing without dialogue, just as a story sequence with music. It turned out to be a kaleidoscopic view of the heroine's life, done with revolving stages. First, you saw Harlow as a schoolgirl, with middy-blouse, and all that; then she becomes a big star and finally takes to drink and becomes a torch singer—the usual cycle. But it was quite interesting. I worked on a number of films after that, but they weren't musicals. . . . We still weren't really sure about the way musicals should be done here. . . .

## *Broadway Melody of 1936*

*Broadway Melody of 1936* was the most successful Metro musical since the coming of talkies and the first *Broadway Melody*. It had a Freed-Brown score; Dave Gould was the dance director; I was musical supervisor. It was also the studio's first encounter with Eleanor Powell. Sam Katz, the producer, had seen her dance on Broadway, and wanted to take a gamble on starring her in her first picture; but everyone else at the studio thought she lacked 'femininity'. Still, she had a certain unusual quality that was very fresh and appealing and, of course, she certainly could dance.

In the finale, I had a chance to develop the kind of idea I had worked on in *Reckless*. I had the song "Broadway Rhythm" split up into five parts: first, Frances Langford and some boys sang it, then Vilma and Buddy Ebsen danced to it. . . . I can't remember what came after, but then June Knight and Nick Long Jr. danced. Finally, Powell came on with a slam-bang finale—everything built up to her. It was like a little revue, and audiences went wild over it.

Another thing I was interested in at that time—it's always been my idea in musicals, of course—was attempting to integrate song into dialogue. There was a number by June

Knight and Robert Taylor ("I've Got a Feeling You're Fooling") done in a penthouse setting, that seemed to be part of the dialogue itself, you may remember. The "Sing Before Breakfast" number, with Eleanor Powell and Buddy and Vilma Ebsen dancing on a tenement roof, was my idea too.

## *Born to Dance*

I worked on all the films that Eleanor Powell did at M-G-M—*Born to Dance*, *Rosalie*, and two more *Broadway Melody* films. For *Born to Dance*, Cole Porter decided to write a really jazzy kind of thing called "Swingin' the Jinx Away". It was Powell's finale, and we had the very devil of a time trying to work out a vehicle for it. Finally, the studio decided to go all out and make it one of those great big epic musical extravaganzas; and the designers thought they'd throw in everything. The music department in turn decided to make super-arrangements . . . and, well, it was a smash-finale, to say the least. It was that really monstrous epitome of nonsense, that big half-million dollar battleship with several thousand dancers and singing sailors with sequined cannons, and Eleanor Powell dancing on the decks. I don't know what to say except that it haunts me as an embarrassment of bad taste. But the audiences loved it, I guess. . . .

## *Judy Garland*

The biggest thing to happen to the M-G-M musical was the discovery of Judy Garland. You know the story of how she and Deanna Durbin made a short subject here called *Every Sunday*? Well, it wasn't really good; and the crazy thing about it was that M-G-M lost Durbin and almost lost Garland too. She was terrific, right from the beginning. I remember, she was brought in and auditioned; she sang "Zing, Went the Strings of My Heart" and I almost fell off the piano bench. When she finished, I went straight into Mr. Mayer's office and said he just had to sign her. But, even after she was under contract, the studio still had nothing for her to do. Then she was given a spot on a radio show I was doing music for at the time, "The Camel Caravan", starring Jack Oakie. Every week I would arrange a number for her, and she won quite a response from listeners. Then a scout from 20th Century-Fox heard her on this show and she was loaned out for Fox's *Pigskin Parade*. Remember her singing "It's Love I'm After" in a snowy football stadium?

Then she came back to Metro, and about that time (1938) the studio threw a big birthday party for Clark Gable. I wrote that "Dear Mr. Gable" song-verse for Judy to sing; and this made show-business history. Jack Cummings, who was working as a producer under Mr. Katz, decided to use the song in *Broadway Melody of 1938*; and after that Judy made several little films—*Thoroughbreds Don't Cry*, *Listen Darling* and *Everybody Sing*, with Fanny Brice and Allan Jones. Then came her childhood masterpiece, *The Wizard of Oz*. I didn't do any writing for this, but a great deal of interpolation and arranging; it was quite a big job of musical supervision.

## *Song Writing*

I'd never aspired to be a song-writer, but after all the elaborate arranging I did for Merman and Garland, it seemed to come about quite naturally. There is always an advantage and a joy in writing songs for someone whose style is familiar to you. But you have to be careful about music in films—so many musicals have been made in which the plot and the songs have nothing to do with each other. Most of my songs are strictly plot songs which cannot be taken away from the movie and put on the hit parade. But the average song-writer is a business man as well, and tries to write the kind of song which can be a commercial success as well as serving the requirements of the movie. Songs *per se* are not as valuable as one thinks they are in pictures, and not many original songs from pictures have been hits. . . .

I believe that songs in film musicals should be part of the script itself, actually sung dialogue—like "Think Pink" in *Funny Face*. This isn't really a *song*, it's a *raison d'être*, explaining Kay Thompson's job and her whole attitude to the fashion business. And when Astaire begins singing "Bonjour Paris", he gets out of the cab, hesitates for a minute, and then just *bursts* into that wonderful walk of his. You couldn't make this live away from the movie itself—you have to see the action. Even a lot of the songs I wrote for Judy Garland, like "In Between" (*Love Finds Andy Hardy*) are complex, something which is both dialogue and song, describing the character and mood of a scene.

## *Working With Busby Berkeley*

For *Strike Up the Band* I wrote one of my favourite numbers of all time for Judy, a song called "Nobody's Got Me". It's a scene in a library and Judy's alone there, putting books away. It's done very quietly and simply, with really great camerawork. Busby Berkeley was in charge of this, and at the end of the scene he had the camera move up overhead and got a magnificent shot of Judy walking into oblivion among the bookshelves, looking about so-high. . . . But, you know, you had to watch Berkeley. He was such a superb technician that a number could get totally lost in images.

Another song in this picture was based on a current dance craze, the Conga; and I was supposed to work it into something for Judy and Mickey Rooney. You may remember in the picture that Mickey has organised his little orchestra and they've arranged an audition for the big Paul Whiteman contest. Anyway, we were ready to shoot the number, starting with the vocal, with Judy all got up in her Conga outfit looking like someone out of a Persian carnival.

Then Berkeley decided he wanted to make "The LaConga" a huge number, full of Edens arrangements, with about five minutes of Judy singing and with every possible type of camera angle; and he decided that he wanted to do the entire song and dance number *in one take*. Nobody thought it was possible, but he rehearsed it with a complete camera crew for five days, laying out every movement step by step, with cameras taking all kinds of angle shots of maraccas and trumpets. It soon became like the opening number in a Broadway show. There was the same great tension, because the number could only be shot once; and when the morning came to shoot, practically the whole studio was down there. Everyone was very tense and keyed up . . . and the result was a real *giving* performance. The scene went beautifully, without a hitch. Even now, it has an unforgettable something extra about it. . . .

The biggest fight I had with Berkeley's techniques, though, was on *Girl Crazy*. I'd written an arrangement of "I Got Rhythm" for Judy, and we disagreed basically about its presentation. I wanted it rhythmic and simply staged; but Berkeley got his big ensembles and trick cameras into it again, plus a lot of girls in Western outfits, with fringed skirts, and people cracking whips and firing guns all over my arrangement and Judy's voice. Well, we shouted at each other and I said there wasn't enough room on the lot for both of us. But he got his way, even though I persuaded him to cut some of the pistol shots. And I must say that this scene, with all those things I disliked, looks wonderful now on TV.

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OPPOSITE PAGE: Musical Images. Top left: the "March of the Doagies" from *The Harvey Girls*. Top right: " . . . epic musical extravaganza"; Eleanor Powell in the battleship finale of *Born to Dance*. Centre, left: Judy Garland in "The Interview" sequence of *Ziegfeld Follies*. Centre: Audrey Hepburn as the fashion model heroine of *Funny Face*. Below: Eleanor Powell and Vilma and Buddy Ebsen in "Sing Before Breakfast", the tenement rooftop number from *Broadway Melody of 1936*.

## *Garland Grows Up*

By this time Arthur Freed had become the hottest thing on the lot, and I worked as associate producer with him on several pictures. I worked on *Little Nelly Kelly* and wrote "It's a Great Day for the Irish" and "A Pretty Girl Milking Her Cow" for Judy Garland. This film gave Judy her first opportunity to portray an adult, acting both the wife and daughter of George Murphy. But the studio executives didn't at all like the idea of Garland's growing up. Mr. Mayer, a very sweet old guy, was in the centre of the debate about making Judy both the mother and the daughter. "We simply can't let that baby have a child," he'd say. . . .

Then we did *For Me and My Gal*, which was Gene Kelly's first picture, and a movie I'm very proud of, though I didn't write any of the score myself. It was about this time—the early forties—that M-G-M was reaching its musical glory, and some great things came out in those years. I was associate producer on *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *The Harvey Girls* and *Yolanda and the Thief*. Actually, I never think of *Meet Me in St. Louis* as a musical; it was so . . . . Well, you know what I mean. As for *Yolanda*, it was exciting and a very healthy experiment in musical development and dance styles.

## *Ziegfeld Follies*

That film was quite a hunk! Astaire went into it right after *Yolanda*, and it was one of the most exciting films I've ever worked on. The biggest number for me was the "Madame Crematon" sequence, which I'd originally written for Greer Garson. Although she was very excited herself about doing the number, she listened to those who advised her that it was 'unladylike' and decided against it. Judy jumped at the chance, and made "Madame Crematon" one of the *tours-de-force* of her career. And that introductory song, "Bring on the Beautiful Girls", is still one of my favourites—a corny thing, just a big, beautiful show-number.

There's an almost tragi-comic story about the finale ("There's Music Everywhere"). You see, we'd gotten hold of some fantastic machine, made in Germany. This machine made gigantic, beautiful bubbles of all colours, and Minnelli had conceived the idea of very artistic, cave-like sets, filmed unusually through a mass of these bubbles. The sets were very beautiful, with grottoes built quite high above the sound stage, with the girls way up there, perfectly arranged. The first shots presented such an enormous spectacle that all of the studio population was down there to see this bubble-machine at work. Then, one day, Minnelli said 'Let's roll 'em', and the music went up and those bubbles started. But they wouldn't stop. Soon the whole place was literally filled with these mammoth bubbles, and everybody started running. It was a riot. They had to call out the fire department. Girls and electricians were fainting up in those grottoes, and everyone was sneezing and coughing. I've never seen so many bubbles in all my life. Well, everything was in a mess when they got the bubbles turned off, and the number was hastily worked-over, and it wound up looking as if it was filmed underwater.

*"Funny Face": Audrey Hepburn, Fred Astaire and Kay Thompson in "Bonjour Paris".*

## *On The Town, Funny Face and after*

With *On The Town* I began to realise my idea of making musicals without over-elaborate production numbers. Intimate musical is the only way to get true entertainment. People are not entertained by chorus lines any more. It's also less expensive and more rewarding to concentrate on the principals. *On The Town* was a very happy wedding of creative spirits. Freed turned us loose on it; and Kelly is a worker—he *loves* to work. The whole layout of the picture and all the numbers (including that wonderful one on top of the Empire State) were unforgettably exciting for all of us to put together.

Some of the other things I did before I worked as full producer were the staging of Garland's "Happy Harvest" number in *Summer Stock* (*If You Feel Like Singing*), and some work on the musical biographies of Jerome Kern (*Till The Clouds Roll By*), Rodgers and Hart (*Words and Music*) and Sigmund Romberg (*Deep in My Heart*). I think the "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" number from *Words and Music* is one of the great things out of this biographical period in musicals. On the whole, though, biographical musicals are the least rewarding, except for occasional pieces of artistry that make them seem worthwhile.

As for *Funny Face*, I'm very happy about it, of course. I did so many things in that picture that I believe in . . . it's uncanny, you know, how the songs worked for the plot, especially those lines in "S'Wonderful" that go 'You've made my life so glamorous, etc.'. Why, there's the whole summation of the picture right there!

. . . . I was all set to go on what promised to be a very exciting thing, but it's going to have to be postponed for a while. It will be called *East of the Moon*, and the script is by Leonard Gershe, who wrote *Funny Face* and the lyrics of Garland's "Born in a Trunk" number for *A Star Is Born.* The entire film will be shot in Japan, in colour, and we want to do lots of exciting things with music and photography—Japan's a wonderful, rich, cultural country. . . . The story will be about an American girl in Tokyo, the daughter of U.S. missionaries. She learns about America when a big league baseball team visits Japan. When I was in Japan a few years ago, you see, Tokyo was monopolised by American baseball players, and I thought, what a wonderful idea for a musical. It isn't cast yet, but we're trying to get an older man to play the baseball manager, a sort of Casey Stengel who sings . . . and a young strapping type to play the brash, younger fellow. Anyway, the older guy gets the girl.

It breaks my heart that I haven't been able to start it yet, but things just happened that way. I've lots and lots of other ideas, though, about future musicals I'd like to get made. I hope I'm able to do them all. . . .

. . . . And tell those people at SIGHT AND SOUND that I always want to be a creative producer. . . .

# Napoleon of the Cinema

BY GEORGES SADOUL

*Charles Pathé (right) with Léon Gaumont.*

On Christmas Day 1957, Charles Pathé, creator of the film industry, died at Monte Carlo. He was born in 1863 at Chevry Cossigny, fifty kilometres from Paris. His mother was a cook, his father, who had once served in Napoleon III's personal guard—a pork butcher. Soon after Charles' birth, Pathé *père* opened a prosperous business at Vincennes, specialising in supplying pork to the army. He was a frugal man, though, and Charles remembered how he and his mother had to share the same pair of shoes, taking turns to wear them to mass each Sunday. By the time they were ten years old, the butcher's sons were working fifteen hours a day for their father, who fed them on scraps of offal. Charles, after five years' military service, embarked for South America in 1889; but failing to make his fortune there, he returned to Paris two years later.

In 1893, newly married and finding life as a 90-francs-a-month clerk impossible, he decided on a great enterprise. Borrowing the enormous sum of 1,000 francs, he bought a phonograph of English make, with twenty pairs of earphones which allowed twenty customers at a time to hear a song or piece of music. When he and his wife took the horse-bus one September morning to a fair thirty kilometres from Paris, they had just enough money for the return fare. But the talking machine was a success, and at twenty centimes a head they made 200 francs on the day's work.

Within six months Pathé had opened a shop for the sale of phonographs. He often came to London to buy his machines, and in 1894 took back with him a peepshow device, an imitation of Edison's Kinetoscope. A French inventor, Charles Joly, began to make similar machines for him and later, after the Lumières' success, projectors. Pathé himself made one or two films for the fairground market—*Arrival of a Train at Vincennes*, *La Bain de la Parisienne*, and so on. After 1897, however, when the animated pictures underwent a severe crisis, he concentrated once more on the phonograph. In 1899 he established, with his brothers, the Societé Pathé Frères; in 1900 their machines triumphed at the Paris International Exhibition; and soon they found a clientele throughout the world.

After 1900, largely owing to the ambitious productions of Georges Méliès, the cinema took on a new lease of life, and Pathé decided to develop the cinema side of his enterprises. Building a great new studio at Vincennes, he entrusted production to Ferdinand Zecca, a one-time *café-concert* singer, who understood very well the requirements of the fairground showmen. He made little thrillers, broad farces, melodramas, "piquant subjects", reconstructions of actualities and the like. His greatest success was the three-reeler *Passion of Christ*, still shown until recently by missionaries.

Between 1902 and 1906 Pathé Frères opened up more than fifty branches all over the world. The profits were enormous —"Only the armaments industry made profits like ours", noted Charles Pathé in his memoirs. The shareholders received immense dividends, but most of the profits went towards the consolidation of a gigantic world monopoly. It covered every branch of the industry: manufacture of films and equipment, the biggest and best equipped studios, laboratories, cinema circuits throughout France, Belgium, Holland, Britain and North Africa. By 1908 the firm was selling in the United States more than three times as many films as all the American producers together. By 1914 it was said in Germany that Pathé films had brought back to France more than the five thousand million francs paid in reparation after 1871.

Although the war interrupted French production for eighteen months, the American profits maintained the organisation's prosperity. After the War it was expected that Pathé would resume its march of conquest. But Pathé felt that America had outstripped France and that it was useless to fight to win back the world market. He felt that production, since it could no longer be relied on to bring back a 200 or 300 per cent return on the engaged capital, had become "hazardous", and decided to abandon it in favour of the more secure activities of the organisation, such as the manufacture of film stock and equipment. Bit by bit, during the years 1919-23, he dismembered his great international empire, selling Pathé Ltd., of London to Lord Rothermere, Pathé Exchange of New York to a Wall Street Group, the Studios Litteraria of Berlin to UFA, and so on. It was a curious spectacle, but typical of French capitalism, to see this industrial Napoleon engineering his own Waterloo, "in the interests of the shareholders"; and it was crowned in 1926 by the sale of his film factories to Eastman Kodak for one hundred million francs.

"They accused me of shipwrecking the French cinema", Pathé wrote in later years, adding that his action was justified since he was followed in it by other French industrialists, notably Léon Gaumont. Certainly French production did founder after these years. When talkies gave a new stimulus to the French industry, Pathé, approaching seventy, finally withdrew from films. Pathé Consortium became Pathé Natan, following the old methods in an even more hazardous way, and at a time of world crisis. In 1934 the firm finally collapsed in a notorious case of fraudulent bankruptcy.

*

I met Charles Pathé at his beautiful villa at Monaco in 1946. Tall and elegant, pink-cheeked and blue-eyed, he retained remarkable physical vigour. But age had tired his mind rather, and he was inclined to repeat himself. In the course of the afternoon he said quite twenty times: "Oh the money I have made with the cinema, M. Sadoul! What money I have made!" It was perfectly true.

Much more than the original million which Grivolas invested in Pathé Frères, the millions of hours of work by the artists and craftsmen whom Pathé employed, had made France the world pioneer of a new art and a new industry. But the financial capital evaporated in financial manoeuvring, when the empire-builder made himself the empire destroyer. If the French cinema has never recovered from the Waterloo of 1920-25, its capital of work and intelligence have born fruit. . . And the prodigious career of Charles Pathé, the great captain of industry, is as significant for France as that of Rockefeller or Pierpoint Morgan is for America.

# IVAN THE TERRIBLE part two

by B. D. GARGA

Although the first part of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* is well-known, Part II has never been publically shown in Russia and remains unknown in the West. Eisenstein designed the film from beginning to end, and this article is illustrated with some of his sketches. Right: Ivan in the Ouspensky Cathedral. Above: the same set, showing the miracle play.

WORK on the first Indo-Soviet co-production, *Across the Three Seas*, took me last year to the Soviet Union. This film, directed by K. Abbas and V. Pronin, is about the Russian traveller Afanasi Nikitin, who went to India in the fifteenth century, preceding Vasco da Gama by about twenty years. I stayed in the Soviet Union for eight months, and worked in the Mosfilm Studios, where such masters of the film as Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko had once worked. Today the traditions of the studio are carried on by directors like Romm, Roshal, Chukrai, Alexandrof, Pyrieff and Yutkevitch. As a member of the Mosfilm family, even for so short a period, I was able to study Soviet cinema at close quarters, and to share something of the excitement of grey-facaded Moscow's artistic world. The current controversy was Kalatozov's extraordinary and striking *The Cranes Are Flying*; the current objects of admiration were Roshal's *The Sisters* (after Alexei Tolstoi's novel *The Road to Calvary*) and Gerasimov's vivid version of Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don*.

For me, however, the greatest reward was to see the Second Part of *Ivan The Terrible*—the banned masterpiece which has become a legend. It was a dream come true. When I arrived in the Soviet Union, I drew up a list of the old and new Soviet films that my Indian colleagues and myself wanted to see. The list was headed, of course, by *Ivan*; but it was the last film to come our way. After a good deal of negotiation, a screening was arranged in the tiny projection room generally used by the studio's chief executive. It had about a dozen seats in all, and the screening of the film was kept a closely-guarded secret. Somehow, though, the word went round; and the little 10 foot square booth was packed to bursting point. Few people, it appeared, had seen the film in the eleven years that had elapsed since Eisenstein completed it.

I took a pad and pencil with me to scribble some notes with the help of my interpreter. Eyes glued to the screen and hand scratching frantically away in the dark—possibly it was not the best way to watch a film for which I had waited all these years. But I had waited, and I was anxious to conserve as much of the experience as I could . . .

* * *

*Ivan The Terrible, Part II* is mainly concerned with Ivan's conflict with the Orthodox Church and the Boyars. The Boyars are gathered around the Boyarina Euphrosinia Staritskaya, who, like a queen bee, directs all the action. The Metropolitan Philip heads the Church's revolt, and he and Euphrosinia work hand in glove. Euphrosinia, who had earlier (Part I) poisoned Ivan's Tsarina, Anastasia, now plans the murder of Ivan. Her plot misfires, however, and it is her own son, Vladimir Andreyevitch, who is killed. The film finishes as the full fury of the ageing Ivan is loosed against Boyars, Church and all the deserters who are hindering his work of consolidating the Russian nation.

After brief credit titles, the film opens with a prologue, introducing shots from the first part of the film. The fatigued and lonely Tsar has returned to Moscow, surrounded by his lifeguards—the Oprichniks—'in black cloaks, with the Broom and Dog's head emblem on their saddles'. As Ivan murmurs to himself: "I have no friends; God is my friend", there is a short flashback to his childhood*. He is a boy of eight, his mother has just died; he is preparing for bed. The Boyar Shuisky throws his feet on to the bed. Young Ivan cries, "Take your feet off my mother's bed!" Laughing, malevolently, Shuisky replies: "Your mother was a bitch and God knows who your father was . . ."

The flashback ends; Ivan turns to the Metropolitan Philip and seeks his friendship: "I ask you not as a Tsar, but as a friend—leave me not alone." When Philip spurns him, there is a frightening sense of loneliness and dejection. Malyuta, one of the lifeguards, approaches Ivan: "I am your dog. I am your friend. You should prefer your dog to your priest."

The Tsar of Part II is introspective, Hamlet-like. He mutters to himself: "What right have you, Tsar Ivan, to judge? And by what right do you wield the sword of retribution?" He rushes to the bedchamber of the long-dead Anastasia, accompanied by Fedor Basmanov, the first of the lifeguards who was dedicated to his service. Fedor tells Ivan that Anastasia was poisoned by Euphrosinia, but that Ivan himself had handed his wife the cup. Fedor's words, "Be firm" recall the words of Anastasia before she died, and restrain his frenzy.

Outside, in the courtyard:

> . . . In the snow stands Malyuta . . .
> On their knees before him Boyars. Three of them, all from the Kolichev family . . .
> The sabres whistle and their heads fall†.

The Tsar descends to the courtyard:

> The Tsar's eyes do not burn with delight, but sorrow.
> The Tsar showers no thanks—but doffs his hat.
> And crosses himself with wide gestures, in memory of the fallen . . .
> And suddenly declares, "Too few!"

Over the bodies of the slaughtered Boyars, the Metropolitan Philip swears "The Church is bigger than the Tsar. Tomorrow I shall bend him, crush him."

The means of humbling Ivan is a miracle play of the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, which is enacted in the Cathedral:

> Into the Cathedral comes the Tsar.
> Philip comes forward to meet the Tsar.
> He stops before the furnace.
> Three lads sing with their crystal voices.
> Passionless, expressionless, without understanding the words; a choir of angelic transparency.
> And these words fly to meet the Tsar:
>
> *'Why, then, shameless Chaldeans,*
> *do you serve the iniquitous Tsar?*
> *Why, then, diabolical Chaldeans,*
> *do you rejoice*
> *in a satanic Tsar—*
> *an outrager, a torturer? . . .'*

Ivan hears the words in astonishment; but continues as if he has not heard them. He goes to Philip for the Benediction. Three times he bows his head; but three times Philip turns away, and the song continues:

> *'Now a miracle shalt thou see;*
> *The Lord of the earth*
> *Shall be cast down*
> *By the Lord of the Heavens.'*

(*Continued on page 188*)

* This sequence appears to be taken from the Prologue to Part I which Eisenstein removed, according to Marie Seton, after editing the first part of *Ivan*.

† This and subsequent quotations are from Eisenstein's scenario for Parts I & II of *Ivan the Terrible*, published in English in *Life and Letters*, Nos. 99-107, 1945-1946, in a translation by Herbert Marshall.

*Stills from "Ivan the Terrible", with Eisenstein's original sketches. Top of page: head of Ivan. Extreme right: Cherkasov's Ivan the Terrible. Above and right: the bishop Pimen, played by Pudovkin.*

From the pulpit, Philip launches an attack on Ivan, threatening him with the vengeance of heaven: "Bow to the Church, Ivan, and submit! Abolish the Lifeguards before it is too late."

Striking the ground with his staff, Ivan cries out: "From now on I shall become that which you name me!" A great parchment angel falls from high up in the roof of the cathedral, and as the choir breaks out:

> *'From Death he saves*
> *From the Flames he rescues,*
> *The Tsar he casts down*
> *And humbles . . .'*

the angel itself falls into the furnace and is consumed.

> Part of the worshippers fall on their knees.
> The Chaldeans fall down.
> Ivan stands surrounded by fire:
> '*Terrible* shall I become!'

The Tsar moves quickly; Philip is arrested. With aid from the Church, Euphrosinia at once sets about plotting the murder of Ivan. Pimen, Episcope of Novgorod, appoints his confessor Peter to do the deed. Euphrosinia's effeminate son, Vladimir Andreyevitch, is as fearful as a mouse when told that it is he who must succeed the Tsar. To comfort him the terrible old woman holds him to her and sings a lullaby.

The whole of the next sequence, in which Vladimir is prepared to receive the knife intended for Ivan, is in colour. The scene is a banquet. The Lifeguards laugh and clap as a masked girl dances in their midst. Ivan, in apparent high spirits, insists upon the terrified Vladimir dressing up in the Tsar's regalia. Himself dressed in a bishop's black robes, Ivan bows before Vladimir and offers him drink. Somehow I was reminded of a Hindu sacrificial ceremony by the scene in which, candle in hand, the tipsy, nervous Vladimir leads the procession into the Cathedral.

*Euphrosinia comforts her frightened son.*

From this point the film goes back to black-and-white. Peter, the priestly assassin, moves between the columns. Taking Vladimir for the Tsar, he plunges his knife into his back. Vladimir falls on the Cathedral floor like a toppled dummy. The succeeding silence is broken by the triumphant voice of the Boyarina Euphrosinia, who, putting her foot on the prostrate body, exclaims: "Look, people! Ivan is dead." When the figure of Ivan, in a bishop's black, suddenly appears from the files of processionists, the Boyarina takes him for a ghost. The assassin, Peter, is led to Ivan, who asks: "Why do you hold him? He only killed the clown!" Vladimir's body is dragged away.

From now on, Ivan proceeds to break the cobra-head of treason and treachery. Pimen is arrested; Euphrosinia is killed. The film ends as a monk chants in the Cathedral the roll-call of Ivan's victims. "Not for myself—but for the motherland", mutters the Tsar, fatigued but still firm in his purposes‡.

* * *

Throughout the entire film, you are aware of the inner conflict of Ivan. Like Hamlet, he is torn within himself, the same melancholy, the same introspection. Yet there is a difference, in that Ivan, always intent upon his cause of uniting Russia, is never dilatory in action. Even so, Eisenstein's interpretation of the Tsar's character in Part II was not acceptable to the Soviet authorities in relation to the political situation at the time that it was completed. A directive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party regarding the film *Great Life* (September 4, 1946), discussing errors into which such directors 'as Comrades Lukov Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Kozintsev and Trauberg' had fallen, said:

> Eisenstein in the second part of *Ivan the Terrible* displayed his ignorance of historical facts by portraying the progressive army of the *oprichniki* as a band of degenerates similar to the American Ku Klux Klan, and Ivan the Terrible, a man of strong will and character, as a man of no will and little character, something like Hamlet.

The film was intended as a trilogy. The entire scheme was conceived before the Nazi invasion; but shooting did not begin until the beginning of 1943, at Alma Alta, in the Urals, where the Moscow and Leningrad studios had been evacuated. The Kazak Government placed their new Palace of Culture at Eisenstein's disposal. Most of the shooting had to be done at night, since during the day electric power had to be diverted to munition factories. Eisenstein wrote, designed and directed; Prokoviev wrote the score; Eduard Tisse (who left Eisenstein during the course of the work) and Andrei Moskvin were the photographers. Part I was released in December 1944, and had a great success. Most of Part II was shot at the same time as Part I, and the rest during the winter of 1944-5. Eisenstein did not finish editing Part II, however, until February, 1946. On the day that work was

‡ The coda of scenes at Windsor Castle and the Palace of Sigismund, King of Livonia, described in published versions of the scenario, appears to have been rejected by Eisenstein at editing stage.

*Cherkasov as Ivan the Terrible.*

completed, Eisenstein collapsed at a party given to celebrate the award of the Stalin First Class Prize for *Ivan The Terrible Part I*, struck by the first of the severe heart attacks which ended his film work. He partially recovered, to learn of the official disapproval his film had aroused. Later in the year, in the magazine *Culture and Life*, Eisenstein published a statement, in which he said:

> We artists forgot . . . those great ideas our art is summoned to serve . . . We forgot that the main thing in art is its ideological content . . . In the Second Part of *Ivan the Terrible* we committed a misrepresentation of historical facts which made the film worthless and vicious in an ideological sense . . . We must fully subordinate our creations to the interest of education of the Soviet people.

Eisenstein proposed a revision of the Second Part of *Ivan*. He and Cherkasov secured an interview with Stalin in the Kremlin, and Stalin gave his support to a project to reshoot certain scenes in *Ivan* and to resume work on the third part of the trilogy, which was to be in colour. Eisenstein never recovered sufficiently to resume shooting, however. On February 11, 1948, a few days after his fiftieth birthday, he died, alone in his flat at Potylika, still at work on his study of colour cinematography.

Whatever the historical truth or untruth of Ivan's character, Eisenstein, in laying bare the innermost recesses of his mind, has succeeded in creating a *whole* Ivan. Cherkasov said of his role:

> Eisenstein set me a whole series of complex tasks. He demanded that I develop and bring out Tsar Ivan's character synchronising the process with the development of the film's action . . . spread over more than twenty years of the Tsar's life. I had to show the complex process that went on in his mind.

The print I saw was ten or eleven years old, and the colour sequence had faded badly. Enough remained, however, to show the bold and imaginative use of colour that Eisenstein intended. But it is not just the colour, or the masterly compositions or the *mise-en-scène*, or even the ideological content, that make *Ivan The Terrible Part II* so memorable. As the major creation of the great master of Soviet cinema, the film is monumental from every point of view. Many people in the Soviet Union expressed to me the hope that the film may be made available for exhibition abroad; and it would indeed be a major tragedy if it were to remain unseen, hidden away in the vaults of the Soviet Film Archive.

*" . . . a portrait of Parisian intellectual youth."* *Anouk Aimée and Giani Esposito in a scene from Alexandre Astruc's "Les Mauvaises Rencontres."*

# French Cinema

## *the old and the new*

by LOUIS MARCORELLES

IF ONE were trying to draw comparisons between France today and the France of twenty years ago, one immediately striking thing would be the much greater part now played by the cinema in the country's cultural and intellectual life. In the late 'thirties, there was talk among the young, and the survivors from the 'twenties, about the great films of what it is still convenient to call the French realist school; directors like Capra and Ford were recognised as major talents of an American cinema whose products occupied two-thirds of the French cinema screens. But in the universities the cinema was scarcely taken seriously. Paris had only two specialised cinemas, the Studio des Ursulines and Studio 28, which kept going precariously by screening revivals. In the provincial towns, French *boulevard* films and "series Z" melodramas shared the screen with the general run of Hollywood production. There were none of the ciné-clubs whose proliferation since the war has played a not inconsiderable part in advancing public taste. It would be misleading to pretend that the 100,000 members registered with the French Federation of Ciné-Clubs constitute an "avant-garde" public; but almost everything that counts today among the younger critics and film enthusiasts has effectively sprung up through the little cinemas of the Latin Quarter and the Cinémathèque. A new generation has grown up with a passionate interest in the cinema; and an impulse has been given, to the extent to

which Paris traditionally dictates the tastes and customs of the country.

Paris today believes powerfully in the cinema. The specialised theatres are increasing in number; films which before the war would have found no audience are now commercially shown. At the same time, it should be noted that the infatuation of the younger generation with the cinema scarcely touches the public at large. In the provinces, things remain much as they were, with few chances for audiences to see the cinema's less commercial experiments. And with a total of about 400 million cinema tickets sold annually, France's film-going public is scarcely half that of Germany or Italy, less than half that of England. Television as yet plays a relatively small part in our affairs—compared at least with developments in the U.S.A. and Britain—and it cannot be accused of stealing the cinema's public. All the same, I don't believe that these apparently contradictory factors—live critical interest in the cinema among the young and the "intellectuals", and a certain holding back on the part of the public at large—are necessarily without their connection.

A factor worth mentioning is the importance attached in France to film criticism. We have, of course, our popular press, content mainly to treat films in box-office terms. But in the more serious papers and magazines the cinema is not, as in Britain, relegated to its weekly column, but often given a whole or half page of the paper. The two leading cultural weeklies are *Arts* (edited by Jacques Laurent and inclined to the Right), and *Lettres Francaises* (edited by Aragon, Communist inspired but somewhat eclectic in its attitudes). Each has a circulation of about 50,000. In neither case is it unusual for much of the front page to be given up to articles on the cinema, polemics on some recent film, interviews with directors, all trailed by big headlines. The two main political weeklies, *France Observateur* and *l'Express*, also give a good deal of space to the cinema, as do papers less indicative of contemporary French opinion but none the less widely read, such as *Le Figaro Littéraire* and *Les Nouvelles Littéraires.* But the main distinction between the French critic and his English counterpart is the absence of that clearly defined gulf between "highbrow" critics (and readers) and the general public. It is fair to say that in France the cinema constitutes a basic ingredient in the intellectual nourishment of anyone at all interested in the arts. The other side of the coin, though, is a tendency towards critical pedantry, dryness, the systematisation of judgments. The Descartes who sleeps at the heart of every Frenchman is inclined to stir at the sight of a film.

Around the two specialised film magazines, *Les Cahiers du Cinéma* (non-political, but like *Arts* a little right-wing in inclination) and *Positif* (more leftist, but with no precise line) is gathered a little knot of *aficionados.* Nowadays, it is in the film reviews that you are likely to find the sort of excitement and enthusiasm that fired the literary magazines of the 'twenties. The cinema clearly is the fashion, the thing people care about. The considerable knowledge of these young critics, though, may find expression in somewhat inflated language: the French "intellectual" is likely to approach life armoured in a whole defensive apparatus of categorical theories, and his danger is that he may be concerned rather to give free rein to his own obsessions than to go out and meet the everyday, working world. That, in effect, seems to be partly what is wrong with the young French cinema at the moment—a narrowness of expression. But in France pure intellect still enjoys inordinate privileges. And one cannot deny that this young school of intellectual enthusiasts has plenty of critical intelligence, even if its writers are liable to fall at times into cynicism or fanaticism.

Here, in any case, we are touching on a whole aspect of modern French society. Pessimism has its solid foundations not only in the work of the three writers who have done most to influence the ideas of the younger generation, Sartre, Camus and Malraux, but more directly in the spectacle of a society torn apart by its own contradictions. More than any other country, perhaps, France has resented the absurdity of a modern world split between two warring ideologies. In France itself, there is co-existence between a significant body of Communist voters (who are not generally speaking Party members, but who bear witness to the spread and attraction of Marxist ideas, particularly among the intellectuals), and a social framework which becomes steadily more Americanised. The majority of the public find it increasingly difficult seriously to concern themselves with the manoeuvres of the politicians; and this plays its part in giving the more forceful of the young a certain detachment from social issues. French

*Social realism in the 'thirties. Left: Duvivier's "La Belle Equipe"; right, Renoir's "Toni".*

*Brigitte Bardot: "Et Dieu Créa la Femme".*

society, then, seems at the moment to offer us not much more than reflections from thousands of little ivory towers, all devotedly cherished.

It is natural enough that the young French cinema, with which I am mainly concerned in this article, should express these disillusionments, should find it easy to escape into aesthetic dilettanteism. A gulf divides the pre-war realism from the present mood; and the connection is more easily made if one keeps constantly in mind the great hiatus of the Occupation years and the period immediately after the Liberation when our cinema, missing the turning towards neo-realism which it might have taken, moved instead towards academism and the great "machine" constructions of directors such as Clément and Clouzot.

2

In any case, it is worth looking briefly back to that rich period of French social cinema covering the years from 1930 to 1939, and passing from Clair and Vigo to Renoir and Carné, *via* Feyder and Duvivier. It may seem odd to mention Clair in this connection, in that the world of his first talkies lies beyond realism, in a mixture of *populisme* and enchantment. But Clair's fantasies were filled nonetheless with the most familiar presences of everyday life. Leaving aside Jean Vigo, whose works were then banned from the screen, one can follow a development through from the first "naturalistic" sound films of Renoir and Feyder to the authentic "social realism" which emerged in 1936 (the year of the Front Populaire) with Renoir's *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (script by Jacques Prévert) and Duvivier's *La Belle Equipe* (script by Charles Spaak). In these films can readily be discerned the popular temper which brought the Front Populaire to power, for all that it is here easily transposed into a climate of genial anarchy. From his first important sound film, *La Chienne*, through *Boudu Sauvé des Eaux*, *Toni* and *Monsieur Lange* and up to *La Règle du Jeu*, Renoir's works advanced towards a new form of realism. At the same time Jacques Feyder, followed by his pupil Marcel Carné, was crystallising the so-called "poetic realism", distinguished by a certain stiffness and formalism and by a morbidity remote alike from the grace of Clair and the healthiness of Renoir. All the same, there is no need to follow the extreme view of Siegfried Kracauer, that the films of the 'thirties "concentrated on the lowest levels of French life . . . because, above that level, all was paralysed."

In the carefree anarchy that followed 1936, when life seemed all honey and the projects of the Front Populaire appeared to hold out every kind of opportunity for the workers, the French cinema was really in touch with the climate of popular feeling. With the war this kind of solidarity vanished, not to be recovered after 1945. The Occupation, by force of circumstances, led to a cinema existing artificially, preserved as it were under glass. Then came a reconstruction of the economic framework of the cinema, a reconstruction which led, after 1945, to an industry both more solid and more rigid, more firmly based but offering fewer opportunities for creative adventure. More recently, there has been the move towards the European Common Market, which seems likely more or less to fuse the cinemas of France, Germany and Italy, to accentuate existing tendencies towards cosmopolitanism and costly international co-productions.

Today the French cinema can live on its legends, on the prestige of the glorious older generation (Clair and Renoir), on the laurels of their successors (René Clément, Henri-Georges Clouzot, Claude Autant-Lara, Jacques Becker) and on the uncompromising personal triumphs of Robert Bresson and Jacques Tati. Bresson and Tati remain exceptions, since they preserve their creative independence at the cost of making films relatively infrequently. Renoir and Clair have for years been able to rely on loyal admirers, ready enthusiastically to applaud any and every film they make. Clément now seems to make pictures only abroad; with *Les Espions* (played by Curd Jurgens, Sam Jaffe, Peter Ustinov and Vera Clouzot), Clouzot has turned towards work of Hollywood-style dimensions. Autant-Lara, just finishing *En Cas de Malheur*, has here joined forces with some of the weightiest names in the French cinema—the novelist Georges Simenon, the scenarists Aurenche and Bost, the stars Feuillère, Gabin and Bardot. Becker, taking over *Montparnasse 19* from the late Max Ophuls, perhaps holds a surprise for us; but after the charm and originality of his bourgeois comedies his latest films (*Ali Baba*, *Arsène Lupin*) have been disappointments.

Since the war, all these directors have been responsible for more or less outstanding films, works whose reputation is as great abroad as it is in France. What they have been unable to rediscover, though, is that generosity of inspiration which animated the pre-war realist school. The cinema seems in danger of becoming an art reserved for what in France is known as "les forts en thème"—that is to say, works lacking real creative originality, adaptations of famous novels, imitations of American styles, films whose distinction is a matter of craftsmanship rather than originality, authenticity, the excitement of living.

There remains, of course, Robert Bresson. And in Bresson's work—particularly in *Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, with its great originality and its quality of esotericism—one seems to find crystallised at once the coldness of the post-war French cinema *de luxe* and the ambitions of the younger generation which is preparing itself to take over from those veterans who seem since 1940 to have found little new to say. With his chilly intellectualism, Bresson has become the hero of a whole generation of young audiences, critics and future film-makers. In a cruel and incoherent world, the function of art will henceforth be to shield itself, mask its feelings, conceal emotions. Is one then to assume that the cinema is fated increasingly to resemble a geometry treatise? I do not believe so: but the problem for the young film-makers now coming to the fore in France is how an art in danger of becoming remote, over-intellectualised, can rediscover contact with popular feeling.

3

The French cinema has its share of film-makers in their thirties who set out with their illusions and ambitions intact but seem fairly quickly to have become resigned to the demands of commercialism. For these directors, the cinema seems to be first and foremost a job; and there is nothing

to be ashamed of in skill which is primarily technical. Among the veterans, Julien Duvivier is the supreme example of a director combining great technical competence with the widest range of subject matter. Sometimes the combination can produce a masterpiece, like *Pépé-le-Moko*, or a slighter success such as *Un Carnet de Bal* or his recent *Pot-Bouille*, a brilliant pastiche of Zola. Directors of this type give strength to an industry, without dishonouring the art of the cinema. May one hope that among the newcomers people like Michel Boisrond (Clair's former assistant, and director of *Cette Sacrée Gamine*) or Claude Boissol (*Toute la Ville Accuse*)—both of them brought up, like all my generation, on the American comedy of the 'thirties—will one day acquire the assurance which will enable them to impose a new style on a cinema still the prisoner of its *boulevardist* and naturalist traditions? Perhaps, although both of them at present seem to find imitation easier than invention.

On the other hand, and despite the many criticisms levelled against them, both Alexandre Astruc and Roger Vadim have individual qualities which make them, for many young French enthusiasts, the representatives of a new *avant-garde*. Their sarcasms, their failures of comprehension, even their very evident humane limitations, place them clearly in the atmosphere of contemporary French intellectualism. Both speak for a limited public, express attitudes developed in the cafés and bars of Saint-Germain des Prés and the Champs Elysées. What they represent, though, remains significant.

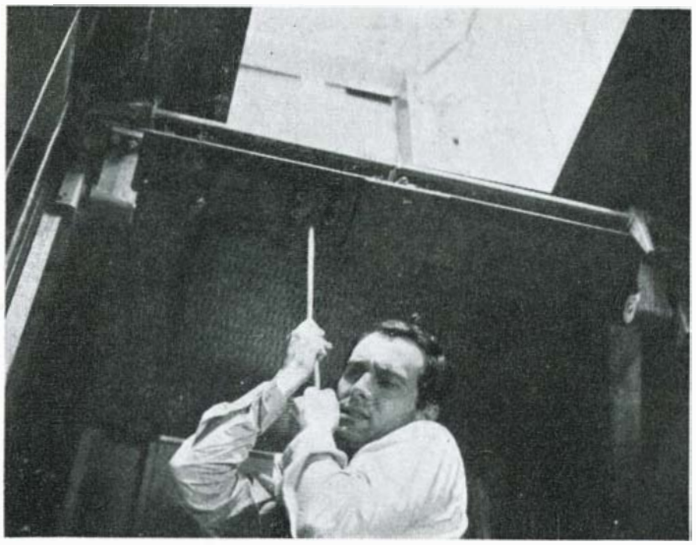
Astruc, now 34, has just completed after two years of inactivity one of the most substantial of French post-war films: *Une Vie*, after de Maupassant, in CinemaScope, with Maria Schell and a 400 million franc budget. He first made his mark just after the war with a novel, *Les Vacances*. He worked on Sartre's *Temps Modernes*, was a film critic on *L'Ecran Francaise*, *La Revue du Cinéma* and *Cahiers du Cinéma*, and defined his own idea of cinema in a now famous article called "Le Camera-Stylo", which is worth quoting:

> The cinema . . . becomes bit by bit a language. By a language I mean the form in which and through which an artist can express his thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate his obsessions, just as in an essay or a novel. That is why I call this new age of cinema that of the *Camera-Stylo*. This image has a precise meaning. It signifies that the film will gradually free itself from the tyranny of the visual, of the image for its own sake, of the immediate and concrete anecdote, to become a means of writing as supple and subtle as the written word. . . . What interests us in the cinema today is the creation of this language.

Theoreticians are not always the best performers. Since writing this, though, Astruc has made two films, the short story *Le Rideau Cramoisi*, after Barbey d'Aurévilly (1952), and the fiercely controversial *Les Mauvaises Rencontres* (1955). The first of these, a stylistic exercise with an atmosphere reminiscent of Poe, clearly indicates his leaning towards Murnau and the German expressionists. The film was made silent, with a commentary narrated by the hero of this strange adventure, in which a young girl of a bourgeois family becomes the mistress of an officer in Napoleon's army and one night falls dead in the arms of her lover.

*Les Mauvaises Rencontres* has altogether more importance. Loosely adapted from a *roman policier* by Cecil Saint-Laurent, its rather unimportant story concerns an inquiry into an abortion. Through this, however, Astruc attempts to give a portrait of Parisian intellectual youth, rather in the manner of Balzac's *Illusions Perdues*. In Venice the film created a minor scandal, with the older and younger French critics exchanging violent insults; in Paris it was received with jeers. But this film, for all its faults, seems to me one of the most significant illustrations of our post-war moral climate.

*Above: Roger Vadim on location for "Les Bijoutiers du Clair de Lune".*
*Below: Alexandre Astruc (right) with Roland Laudenbach.*



*"Ascenseur pour l'Echaffaud".*

In it are honestly reflected some of the myths which influence a whole generation of young French intellectuals: the desire for success at any price, boredom with life, cynicism as total as it is naive. Two years before Françoise Sagan, Astruc showed us (perhaps in spite of himself), the vacuity of a world without solid foundations, deeply corrupt, but a world in which youth, through its very despair, takes on an extra quality of pathos. It is not accidental that Françoise Sagan deeply admires the film, that in her novel *Dans un Mois, dans un An* she takes up some of its themes and atmosphere, and that she and Astruc collaborated on a feature which was turned down by the producers.

Roger Vadim represents another brand of Parisian success. Of Russian descent (his real name is Vladim Plemmianikov), but entirely brought up in France, Vadim is now 29. He began his career as an actor immediately after the war, wrote a few unpublished novels, and worked on the well-known weekly *Paris-Match*. It is not perhaps too far-fetched to discover some of the magazine's characteristics in his own mentality; the mixture of compromise, a certain taste for the sensational, a gift for standing on the edge of a number of movements while at the same time holding to certain very precise interests. Vadim entered the cinema thanks to Marc Allegret: in Allegret's biographical film about André Gide, he was the pale youth seen at the side of the Master. The turning point in his career, however, was his meeting and subsequent marriage with Brigitte Bardot, then unknown, whom within two years he had made the most successful of French stars. Bardot, one can safely say, was Vadim's creation; and it was natural and fair that when Vadim got the chance to direct his first feature Bardot should be his star. This film, *Et Dieu Créa la Femme*, is still attracting crowds and sarcasm in five continents. For me, it remains one of the most genuine, youthful and original works produced in France since 1945. The sexy publicity surrounding the film should not blind us to the justice of the picture it gives of a certain section of French youth—a picture comparable, perhaps, to that of *Rebel Without a Cause*.

The film has been attacked both for its exploitation of sex and for its lack of dramatic structure. The first charge is obvious: Vadim is clearly exploiting the assets of his young wife. Other directors have done the same. What is new is the character she represents, a sensual young animal, hungry for pleasure, amoral, living by instinct, and existing very much in the present. One can pass moral judgments on Vadim's heroine, but one can scarcely deny her existence. As far as narrative is concerned, Vadim seems to share some of Nicholas Ray's ability to catch at the vibrance and incoherence of life rather than to present an orderly dramatic structure. He also has considerable plastic sense and an innate feeling for colour. (This is more apparent in his second film, *Sait-on Jamais?*, also in CinemaScope and with Françoise Arnoul. Though too artificial to be successful, it beautifully conveys the strange splendours of Venice in winter.) Moreover, Vadim has introduced a new atmosphere and style of playing to the French screen. As he himself expresses it:

> In my film I strive not to tell the story, because I do not want that; what pleases me is to depict people, little bits of life, and to give them the greatest possible richness and truth . . . I did not want to "explain" the character (of Brigitte Bardot) through dialogue, because I think that is dishonest. You should never explain one character through the others.

The attitude is an honest one because it at least has the merit of *respecting* appearances. Later on, however, comes the time to arrange them, integrate them into a vision of life. In this respect we must recognise the failure of Vadim, of Astruc, and in literature of Sagan: aware only of a restricted world—money, the easy life, unscrupulous cynicism—these young intellectuals are remote from the life of their country as a whole. Their work is limited and contradictory, but it has a kind of honesty; and perhaps this is preferable to the resourceful philistinism of some of the older generation.

4

Whatever one feels about the work of Astruc and Vadim, it is thanks to them, and particularly to the spectacular box-office achievements of *Et Dieu Créa la Femme*, that producers now begin to show some confidence in the younger generation. This year has seen a phenomenon unknown for quarter of a century: a first film from a young man of 25. The director is Louis Malle, a former student at IDHEC and assistant to Cousteau on *Le Monde du Silence;* his film, *Ascenseur pour l'Echaffaud*, has been financed by Jean Thuillier, producer of Bresson's latest picture, and written by Roger Nimier, a fashionable young right-wing writer. The results are not entirely happy, in that the picture's intellectual pretensions are not backed up by creative invention; a melodramatic intrigue introduces some allusions to actuality (the war in Algeria) which seem both grotesque and incoherent. In fact the only film we saw last year which honestly confronted contemporary actuality was Claude Bertrand-Aubert's *Patrouille de Choc*. Shot entirely in Indo-China, and the work of another director in his twenties, it tells in an almost documentary style of the desperate struggles of a French military patrol lost in the Vietnamese jungle.

Another new development is the making of films outside the traditional production systems, of which the most interesting is Claude Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge*. Chabrol, a young critic on *Cahiers du Cinéma*, spent twenty million francs (his own money) on the film, shot it entirely on location in a little village of La Creuse, Sardent, where he spent part of his childhood, and used artists and technicians who like himself are under thirty. His film, a professional production undertaken with the best kind of amateur spirit, is perhaps the boldest experiment of the contemporary French cinema. If it succeeds (and I believe it will), it would act as a tremendous stimulus, not least to his colleagues on *Cahiers* who have already ventured into short film production. François Truffaut has directed *Les Mistons;* Jacques Rivette made *Le Coup du Berger* (a difficult film, but one revealing a striking temperament); and Jean-Luc Godard made *Charlotte et Veronique*, with Nicole Berger and Anne Colette. Made at the directors' own expense, these films spring from a love of the medium and signal the arrival of a new generation which in ten years or so could dominate our cinema.

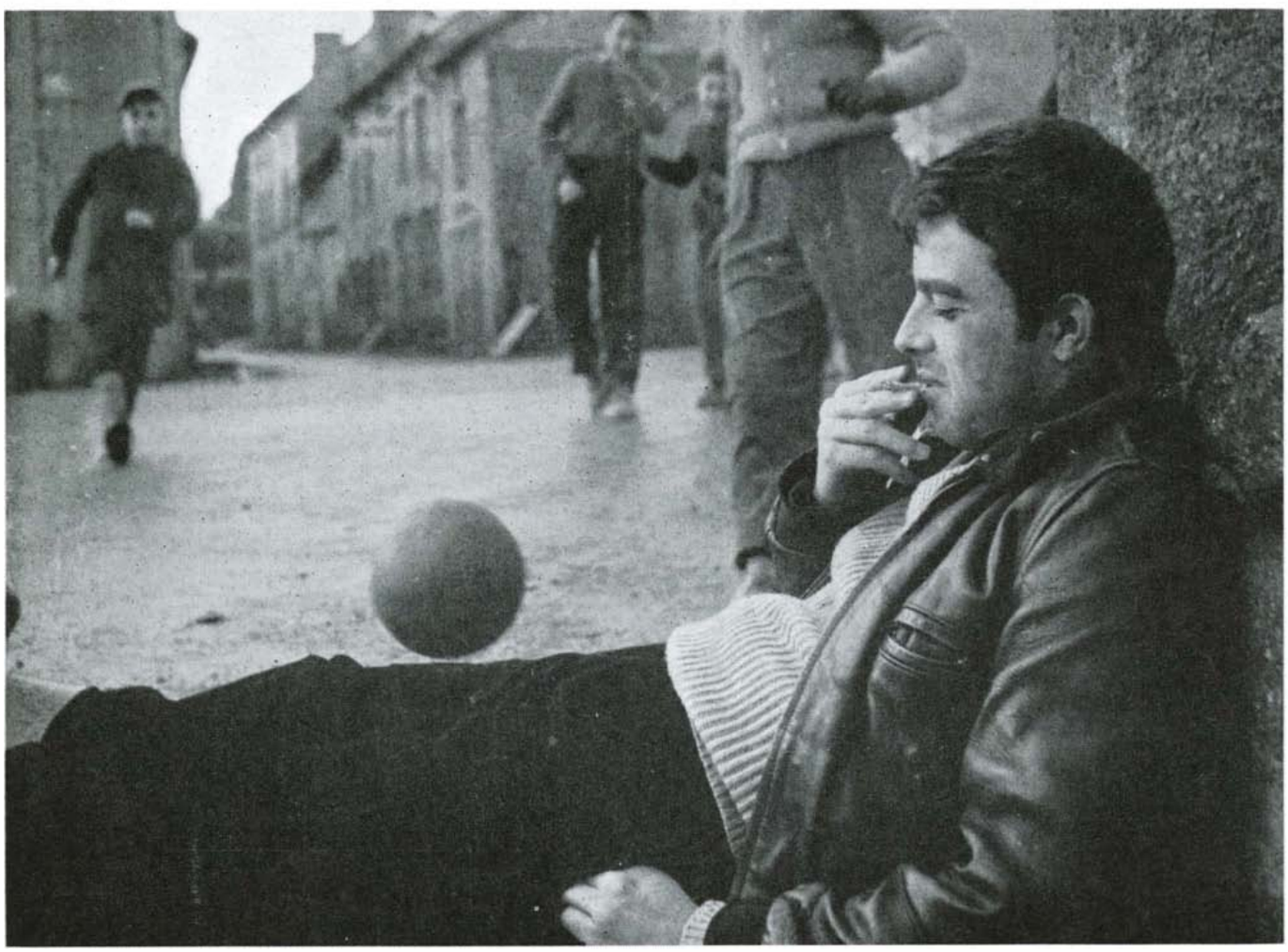
It is a generation which reflects the nihilism that has swept French post-war life, a generation detached from politics

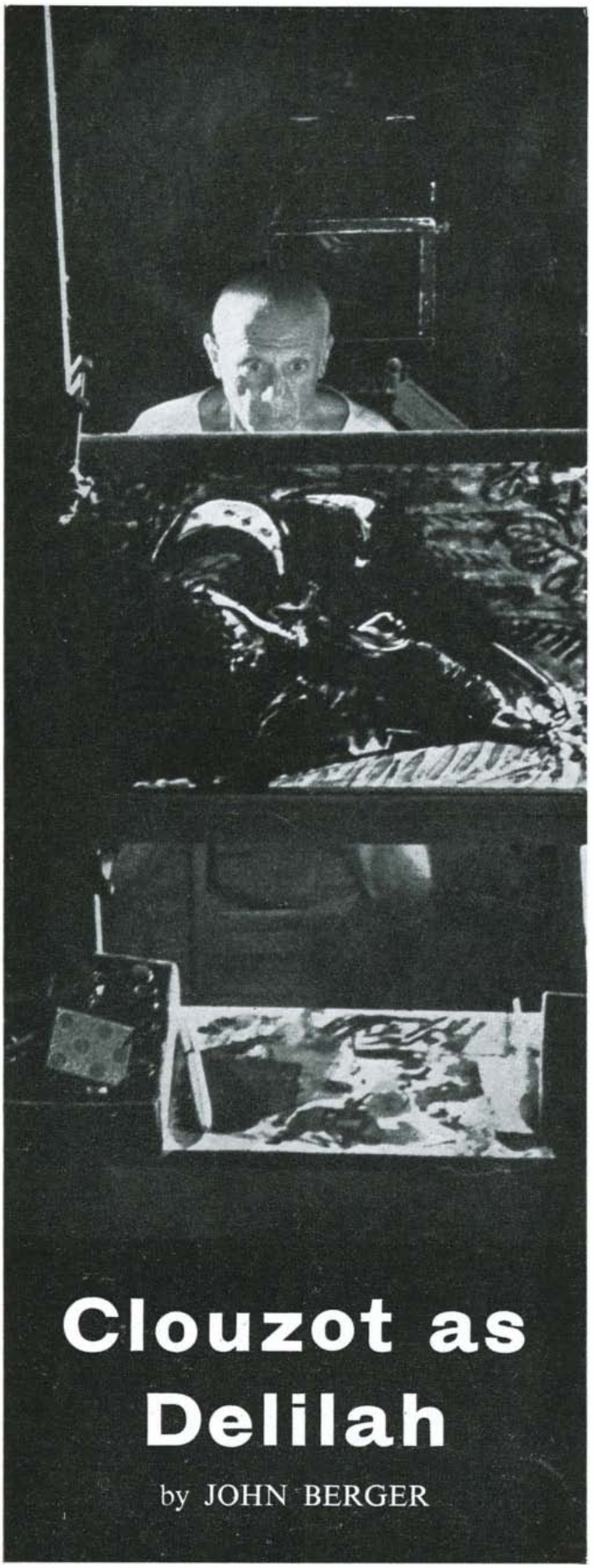
and social pre-occupations, concerned with its own pleasure and . . . the cinema. Yet a link between the generation now in its fifties and the under-thirties might be found through the ranks of the best documentarists of the past ten years. I am thinking particularly of Alain Resnais, Georges Franju and Pierre Kast. Resnais's films on Van Gogh and Picasso and his *Nuit et Brouillard* are so well known that it is hardly necessary to reiterate that he represents, with Bresson, the highest artistic and moral ambitions of the present French cinema. Franju has become, despite himself, something of a legend: the rebel who refused to compromise with the social order as expressed through the Army and the Church. Kast, sometime critic and a collaborator of Jean Grémillon (a director now reduced to inactivity, since he cannot in the commercial cinema treat the social subjects of his choice), has managed to make in *Désastres de la Guerre* (after Goya's drawings) and *La Guerre en Dentelles* (after Callot) epigrammatic works of an impertinence worthy of the best of the Encyclopaedists. *La Guerre en Dentelles*, *Nuit et Brouillard* and Franju's *Hôtel des Invalides* provide examples unequalled in the field of features of films in which merciless social criticism is allied to the highest aesthetic aspirations.

These three directors, however, confronting the problems of feature production, met difficulties which are to some extent experienced by all documentarists who try to make this transition. By reason of its scope, its economics, its working methods, the short film allows the film-maker to remain the master of his creation. In feature production, he must of necessity rethink his approach. Although he has been offered feature subjects, Resnais admits his fear of undertaking a venture in which so much is at stake; and he refuses to submit to the pressures of the commercial world. Franju, after similar hesitations, is now on the point of making his first feature, *La Tête contre les Murs*, adapted from a rather cruel novel by Hervé Bazin. Kast, on the other hand, has already directed a feature, a science fiction comedy called *Un Amour de Poche*. Here, unhappily, he was unable to give free rein to his critical shrewdness, and the film emerged as cold and over-intellectual.

A true reflection of French society itself, the French cinema at the moment provides a picture of anarchical confusion; in which, nevertheless, individuality, through various ruses and devices, has probably a better chance of free expression than in many more ordered countries. The picture has two faces. On the one hand, there are the big international films, the range of costly co-productions which are giving an international character to the French cinema. On the other, there is the significant advance of young talents, and the whole attitude to films taken by the younger generation. Nowhere, I believe, is the cinema approached with a more acute sense of the particular qualities and demands of the seventh art. By this younger generation, the film is recognised as a form of expression as original as literature or the fine arts, and in our present context more important. It is out of this climate that work is being produced, and will continue to be produced, which may once more restore France to the position of creative eminence which she held in the 'thirties.

*A scene from Claude Chabrol's "Le Beau Serge".*





# Clouzot as Delilah

by JOHN BERGER

IF YOU choose a painter of extraordinary genius, and if he has the kind of confidence which makes him not just ignore but actually welcome the camera and the spotlights pointed towards him, and if you then film him at work, you can't really go wrong. You might if you had a script, but Clouzot uses Georges Auric's music instead. One is grateful for his film because one is glad that Picasso is alive, still celebrating, still chasing, still improvising with a virtuosity that is only comparable to Chaplin's.

Should we leave it at that? *The Picasso Mystery* lasts seventy-five minutes. During this time Picasso draws or paints fifteen new pictures. For a few moments we see him in person—and also Clouzot; all the rest of the time we watch the screen, which has become the page or canvas on which he is working. A line elongates itself: a brushload of colour descends: dots are sown like seeds to decorate: a fish changes into a cock, a cock into a fawn's head: a goddess of a nude is drawn like a capital letter in copperplate: a whole canvas is rubbed out and begun again: a goat's head becomes a goat's skull and then puts on its flesh once more: the goddess returns, always impervious to the little man who stares up at her through his grotesque mask of a face. Here is the cartoon of genius, in both senses of the phrase. And if nobody is told that the grotesque little man is Picasso's caricature of himself, perhaps it is just as well. Is this the time to cry Tragedy?

It is always the time, for if all tragedies were *admitted*, the world would be happier. But how to begin to explain, without seeming to want to establish a corner in understanding the "true nature of Picasso's genius", etc.? This film, if it were shown throughout the country, would popularise Picasso as nothing else could. His is a warm, magnetic, cheeky popular personality; there is nothing of the Grand Old Man about him. And the film reveals this. Is that not justification enough for it? Of course it is. One is grateful for this film because one is glad that Picasso is alive.

But don't let anyone come in—as all the film critics have done—with the comforting superlatives: "A great film about the greatest artist of modern times". And for that matter, don't let anyone harp on the title too much: *The Picasso Mystery*. If there is a mystery about Picasso, the mystery is that so few people have recognised the most obvious fact about him—and Clouzot is not apparently amongst those few. Picasso is the world's most gifted artist to have worked through the first half of this century. He has produced a number of masterpieces, the last of which he painted during the last war. Since then he has produced nothing comparable to even his lesser paintings of the 'thirties. His talents are as sharp as ever. It is not a question of senility, as any photograph of him can prove. It is more tragic than that. He has become during the last fifteen years an entertainer, because he can find nothing, no theme, to take seriously. The Western world has heaped money upon him and stolen his sense of purpose; the Communist world has honoured the man and denied the artist. He has been left alone with his gifts, which he himself increasingly considers to be trivial and useless. Picasso is the victim of 20th century monopoly capitalism just as shamefully as Van Gogh or Gauguin were the victims of 19th century capitalism. I don't, of course, expect everyone to pose it in these sweeping Marxist terms, but I do expect a man who sets out to make a frank, intimate film about Picasso to be aware of something other than his *success*. Clouzot appears not to be. He climbs—and he himself has great cleverness as a player—on to the band wagon, which in fact is a hearse.

Of course, the film is fascinating. We are all fascinated by a man drawing, even if he is only a hack portrait sketcher on the pier. And if he is also, as Picasso is in this film, a conjuror and a comedian, so much the better. And if the comedian's jokes are all bitter ironies about himself, no matter, for their speed, their timing, their magnificent confidence, prevent us from wondering about the pain from which they derive. Of

course the film is fascinating. But it is a film about a living man whose life must be considered as a whole. The life is bound to dwarf the film; and so one is bound to ask, not just how does this film fill 75 fascinating minutes, but what significance does it have in relation to the life? Whole art schools have been taken to see it without a word of warning. Here is a film which shows a living genius at work. No: here is a film which reveals in its own approach how a genius can be castrated. It is Picasso's true creativity that is in the coffin on the hearse.

2

Let us now examine this operation of Clouzot's in greater detail. Before the film begins, we are told that it makes history, because it shows us what is in the mind of a genius while he is working. If only we could have known—the voice wishes for us—what was in Joyce's mind while he was writing *Ulysses*. Surely in this case we do know exactly! But the fact that an unfortunate example has been chosen is not the point. Why should we bother about what is in a genius's mind when he is working? Surely the only important thing (except possibly to professional psychologists) is the *explicit* work which is the result of his working. A genius is not a case history: he is important only in relation to what he produces—works of genius. Thus, this concern with the artist's mind, instead of with what comes out of it, amounts to a denial of the value of a genius, *except as a personality*. What he gives to other men is made unimportant; he is merely turned into an idol for them.

The technical gimmick of this film—placing the camera behind the semi-transparent surface on which Picasso works, and so photographing the progress of the work whilst keeping the crayon, brush and artist's hand invisible—is not in itself a bad idea. But the way in which Clouzot uses it leads to another false conclusion. All the excitement, because all the movement in the film, is centred on the process of producing the work: the finished result is no more than the termination of this movement, the end of the act, the moment when the conjuror bows to the applause he has earned. This emphasis on the process lying behind the work, instead of on the statement it finally makes, is typical of the thinking of those who are culturally and humanly without sure values. The final statement demands to be judged: but the process that leads up to it can simply be watched. Thus, the artist is not only turned into an idol but also into an entertainer. The last stage of the castrating operation remains to be carried out: it is carried out in the second half of the film.

Here we see the process not of drawing, but of painting. And so, because a painting takes hours instead of minutes, the time is telescoped—which is, of course, reasonable. But—and this is the point—the film is no longer continuous. Picasso worked and then the painting was filmed, he worked on it further and it was filmed again; and so on, perhaps for nearly a hundred times. The constant alterations which he carries out consequently look to us in the cinema almost like 'animation' in the cartoon sense. A reclining nude's head turns this way and that as Picasso searches for the head and position he wants. This is a trick, but in itself it is not so damaging. Clouzot's connivance here is a connivance of omission. Between the stages of the painting, why did he not give us shots of the reality Picasso was both remembering and working towards? Why did he not show us a real goat's skull, real holiday-makers on the beach, a real bull, a real woman moving her head? With the film's double advantage of movement and of cutting, it would have been possible (as it never can be in a still photograph) to show sequences which would have demonstrated and clarified the particular aspect of each subject which Picasso was seeking. And this indeed would have made film history.

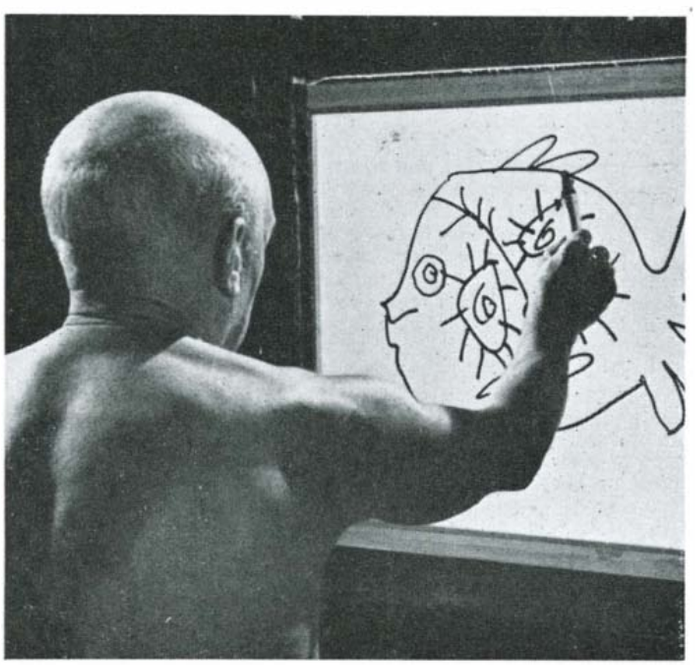
To have done this, though, would have broken the spell. Instead of having the suspense in the dark studio of wondering whether Picasso can finish the picture before the film runs out (this is another trick introduced by Clouzot), one would have let in the wide, diverse world where drama has to be *found*, not just invented. Instead of safely entertaining with *The Picasso Mystery*, Clouzot might have been accused of being "educative".

This omission also distorts what we do see. Because we are given no clue as to why Picasso constantly corrects and changes what is in the picture, all the struggle which lies behind that correcting and changing becomes meaningless. The drawn figures move around and re-arrange themselves like dogs trying to get comfortable. Or, if one does think of the painter, one thinks of his "temperament" or his "divine discontent" or his "impetuosity"; of anything except the truth, that, like every true artist, he is struggling to get the better of reality.

A defender of the film might argue that it is reasonable to take the audience's knowledge of the reality of women, bulls, goats, and so on, for granted. And on the face of it, this is reasonable. Yet if it is, why are the best works of Picasso, Léger or the Cubists so difficult for most people to understand? Surely, at least in part, because these works embody new visual truths and most people are conservatively blind.

The film is an ideal medium for breaking down this conservatism. Clouzot, however, does not (or dares not?) use it in this way. He presents Picasso's paintings as new growths, new inventions with a private independent life of their own. Certainly, the audience then has to admit the existence of these unfamiliar objects, but they remain independent objects. It is as though we were shown a mirror without ever having been told that what we see in it is ourselves. Thus, finally, Picasso is divorced from reality. We enter "his" world; he does not conduct us round *the* world.

The operation is complete. The most gifted artist of our time, whose tragedy has been that he has only occasionally found themes great enough to absorb all his gifts, is turned into a theme unto himself: is turned into an idol; a conjuror; a dreamer. The only question that remains is why did Picasso allow it? But then why did Samson not suspect Delilah?



*"The Picasso Mystery".*
*" . . . the artist is turned into an entertainer".*

# Film Reviews

## THE SEA WALL

THE last few years have seen the rise of a new and exotic brand of film: the international hybrid. American directors, working in Europe and backed by European financial interests, have produced pictures like Welles' *Confidential Report*, Robert Rossen's *Mambo* and Nicholas Ray's *Bitter Victory*. International casting has resulted in a *Grand'Rue* (American actress plays a Spanish girl in a Spanish-French co-production) or a *Notte Bianchi*. These films have something in common in that they are all more or less failures; interesting or curious failures, perhaps, but works which seem to have come into existence through some uneasy amalgamation of talents rather than to have firm foundations in reality. Co-production, when kept within reasonable bounds, as an economical way of making an expensive film or because a subject genuinely crosses national boundaries, is logical and worthwhile. But the habit of taking a director from one country, a writer from another and an actor from a third, playing the international permutations until a film loses all sense of national character, has yet to produce a work that is not to some extent freakish.

To this company must now be added *The Sea Wall* (Rank), produced by an Italian impresario, Dino de Laurentiis, directed by a Frenchman, René Clément, scripted by the director and an American, Irwin Shaw, and played by a cast mainly American but reinforced from Italy (Silvana Mangano and Alida Valli) and France (Yvonne Sanson). To carry the international complications a stage further, the action is nominally set in Indo-China, but location shooting was done in Thailand. The results are as baffling and outlandish as might be expected: a mongrel film, with some elements of distinction in its pedigree.

Marguerite Duras' novel, from which the script is adapted, has been described as a study in decaying colonialism. It concerns a harsh, weather-beaten woman who has bought land on the Pacific coast of Indo-China and struggles to maintain her little ricefield empire behind the flimsy barricade of a wooden dyke against the sea. Her two children, restless and discontented in this primitive wilderness, long for the city and spend their time playing the gramophone and practising their own brand of rock'n'roll. Work on the land is hard and fruitless; city life is corrupt and treacherous; and the family has no escape. The girl turns to a stranger, a glum ex-sailor burdened by a sense of guilt because of the loss of his ship; the boy, on a venture into the city, has an inconclusive affair with the mistress of a rich business man. When the mother dies, a way of escape is at last open. The girl takes it, with her melancholy adventurer, but the boy remains, to rebuild the sea-wall as a concrete barricade.

If the novel presented a decaying French colonial society, the film deals in more easily fashionable currency: restless adolescence, rock'n'roll exhaustively used as an elementary symbol of unease, and over it all a coating of exoticism. Photographed in Technirama and Technicolor by Otello Martelli, the film is often handsome to look at. It never appears better than in a long aerial shot, partly obscured by the credits, which sweeps across the Thai villages and ricefields. But this and other sequences, such as a romantic love scene on the river, the sudden glimpse of a gilded dancer in a night-club, or the mother's funeral procession, all colour and gilt, play against the tone of the film. If the intention was to present a picture of the Europeanised East shabbier and more defeated than Somerset Maugham's world of seedy planters drinking on tropical verandas, then the point is lost if the camera goes after the effect of an exotic travelogue.

This, though, is only one of many incongruities. The choppy continuity, particularly in the early scenes, the erratic plot development, the blare of jazz to start the action off on some new tack, suggest that the film we are seeing may not be entirely the film originally intended. The *enfants terribles* brother and sister, on whose relationship the film pivots, seem in any case scarcely to belong to the same family. Anthony Perkins, lanky and irresolute, gives another good performance as the troubled, essentially American adolescent looking for a place in the world. Silvana Mangano is composed, cautious, European. As the mother, Jo Van Fleet has a part full of harsh tirades and mute, animal suffering: it is, in its way, a *tour de force*. Richard Conte as the adventurer, Nehemiah Persoff, in the best written and most coherent part as a city slicker with a sports car and a bullying father, and Alida Valli, sad and jaded as the traditional woman with a past, represent the city influences that impinge on these backwood primitives.

Through the haze of ill-defined intentions, one has reminders of Clément's technical skill. It is evident in the terse editing style, largely dispensing with dissolves, in the cruel and highly calculated episodes of brutality, as the business man drinks his way into oblivion in a night-club or the brother and sister coldly mock the visitor from the city. Technique and some good playing, though, cannot salvage a piece which has the incoherent pretensions one now associates with films of the new international brigade.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

## STREET OF SHAME

REGRETTABLY, our knowledge of the career of Kenji Mizoguchi still remains very sketchy and incomplete. The recent Japanese season at the National Film Theatre introduced us to one aspect of his personality, with such rich and evocative period pieces as the *Ugetsu* and *Chikamatsu Monogataris*. His last film, *Street of Shame* (Gala), completed in 1956, the year of his death, is far removed from this world of fantasy and legend; in its sad exploration of a particular *milieu* of human degradation, it has affinities with some of the films shown in last year's Venice retrospective programme. Mizoguchi's insight into the psychology of women can be traced back through his entire career, notably in the films dealing with the lives of geishas (*The Sisters of the Gion*, 1936) and prostitutes (*Women of the Night*, 1948). *Street of Shame* perhaps represents a kind of summing up of his feelings on the subject.

Set in a fashionable brothel in Tokyo's notorious Yoshiwara district, *Street of Shame* provides miniature case histories of half-a-dozen of its "employees": one works in order to maintain an ailing husband and child, a second tries to earn enough money to join her son, a third has a lover and an ambition to set up a real home for herself. These narrative threads converge to build up a picture of the social pressures which cause prostitution—fear, the need of money, lack of parental control—and the social stigmas which follow. Mizoguchi also shows the complex financial arrangements operating within the brothel and the control exerted by its "keeper". This character, incidentally, is depicted not as a monster but a shrewd business man, constantly warning his girls of the irresponsible aims of politicians and social workers who seek to "set them free". In view of the employment problems in contemporary Japan, his conviction that he is providing a kind of social welfare scheme has a certain ironic truth of its own.

Mizoguchi's style in this film is sober, restrained and, at first glance, somewhat monotonous. But it is a style that allows details of characterisation to emerge slowly and imperceptibly; the narrative is divided into little scenes, meticulously detailed and observed, rather in the manner of Heinosuke Gosho. Consequently, the film's best episodes carry sudden flashes of revelation—the married prostitute, discussing her situation with her husband in a drab little café, recalls the time when they contemplated suicide; Mickey (Machiko Kyo), the raucous ex-mistress of a G.I., spurns her father's plea to return home and throws the memory of his own indiscretions back at him. Most poignant of all is the final scene, with the frightened novice, her young face taut and strained under the obligatory powder and paint, tentatively advancing into the garish street and the world of men.

The excellent playing of a largely female cast has that density and cohesion to be found in the best of the contemporary Japanese films we have seen. Machiko Kyo, in particular, plays with a fierce, destructive drive (a marvellous contrast to her phantom princess in *Ugetsu*) and Michiyo Kogore makes the anguish of the married girl very real and disturbing.

Given this subject and a talented cast, it seems reasonable to expect that Mizoguchi's response would be complete and wholly satisfying. Much of the film, certainly, has a strong and humane commitment; unfortunately, it is also flawed by the very elements

*"The Seventh Seal"*

one hoped Mizoguchi would have been able to avoid. The soundtrack, for instance, is burdened by a bizarre musical score full of weird electronic *boings* and vibraphone effects. The script, occasionally facile, has disconcerting overtones of melodrama and hysteria. Although it never descends to the depths plumbed by its European counterparts, there is an element of cliché here which seems an inevitable accompaniment to the depiction of this *milieu*, whatever the country of origin. It would be interesting to learn what control Mizoguchi had over Masashige Narusawa's script, or the policy of the production company. These influences may explain why the film has a certain coldness and feel of the studio about it.

The unpredictable vagaries of distributors have also played a sad joke on this outstanding artist. *Street of Shame*, the first of Mizoguchi's films to be shown commercially in London, has appeared, minus its main credit titles, as co-feature to a tedious but highly exploitable nudist travelogue, which means that it is unlikely to reach the audience it deserves. If it encourages distributors to obtain some of his earlier and greater works, it would be churlish, I suppose, to complain.

JOHN GILLETT

## THE SEVENTH SEAL

THE SEVENTH SEAL (Contemporary) is a revelation, both in its authentic strangeness and in the new light it throws upon its director, Ingmar Bergman. With this extraordinary film one can discard previous reservations—Bergman is a craftsman with a real vision, working within a commercial establishment, for whom filmmaking is and can be nothing less than a personal catharsis. Bunuel, Mizoguchi, Fellini, and (so far as we know) Vajda—these are among the cinema's visionaries, men such as Granach's strolling juggler in *Warning Shadows*, who reveal the truth through hallucinations, the truth that is their own truth or no truth at all. At one time it seemed doubtful whether Bergman was of this company. Admittedly both *Sawdust and Tinsel*, a painful, twisted study in humiliation, and *Smiles of a Summer Night*, a frosted, bitter-sweet exercise in *fin-de-siècle* romanticism, showed the highly individual expertise of the conjuror. Youth, age, love and death prowled the dark corridors; hidden tensions hovered on the brink of a private myth. But was it not all a shade too rococo, too calculated, a series of graceful and mannered distractions? And did not these distractions cover up a certain constraint verging on solipsism? It is the easiest and most fatal thing in the world for a director, the vitality of whose work springs from an intense, revolutionary urge towards self-expression, to find himself imprisoned by his own *alter ego*. This is a problem Fellini still has to face; and one that Bergman, in *The Seventh Seal*, has faced and overcome with assurance.

In the first place, he is a born story-teller. His title is taken from the Apocalypse, and his story—set in 14th century Sweden—begins and ends with a powerful sense of omen and wonder. A bird hovers and screams, the sea-shore is beaten by breakers, two horses taste and smell the ocean, a squire (Gunnar Bjornstrand), returned from the crusades, lies exhausted on the sand, and his knight (Max von Sydow) challenges Death to a hopeless, delaying game of chess. While the phantasmal contest is in progress, knight and squire journey across the plague-stricken countryside. The knight, tormented by doubts about the existence of God, finds momentary peace as he eats and drinks with a little family of strolling players. The squire, a tough, carnal, reassuringly eupeptic cynic, saves a girl from a corpse-robber and prays that his wife is by now dead. As they proceed, they encounter a group of howling, hysterical flagellants; a mad girl is burnt as a witch; an old ham actor

*Suburban development society: Patricia Owens, Jeffrey Hunter, Joanne Woodward and Cameron Mitchell in a scene from "No Down Payment".*

who plays the part of death steals the blacksmith's wife, fakes suicide to escape the blacksmith, then relaxes in the bough of a tree, congratulating himself on his latest performance, only to find Death sawing down his refuge. The chess-game is all but over, and still the knight has failed to give meaning to his life by one last gesture of faith in his fellow men. He finally cheats Death of his fullest hopes by upsetting the chess-board—a momentary distraction that allows the chosen innocents, the strolling player, his wife and child, to escape. But the rest of the company must face their destiny. Death comes to them in the knight's castle and goads them, hand-in-hand like a troupe of solemn dancing clowns, silhouetted against the stormy skyline, over the horizon of the distant hill "towards the dark lands . . ."

This is a wholly indigenous film, with something of Stiller's sophistication and Sjöstrom's sense of elemental worship—indigenous, that is, in its style. It is also a mature embodiment of childhood's nightmare fears, still to be seen in all their perverted horror painted on the walls of those mediaeval country churches where Bergman's father once performed funerals and baptisms and preached sermons. It is a period film in the sense that *Ugetsu Monogatari* is a period film, but not in any way in the manner of Fritz Lang's *Destiny*, where an almost identical subject was handled with heady, heavy, defeated romanticism. There is no implied retreat or pessimism in Bergman's choice of subject, even though his main images are familar from any number of mediaeval morality plays and Chaucerian comedies. These archetypal symbols have been appropriated to lend the film clarity in its quality of timelessness and also its contemporary relevance. The witch-hunters, the penitents and the pillagers are still among us; we are each of us of their breed, deaf, denying, stifled by insecurity, while a bird hovers and screams its warning above—an omen of the Age of the H-bomb.

Death answers nothing. He remains a dispassionate, cultured, soft-mannered old gentleman, treading softly through a lonely world. Cowled and black-robed, Bengt Ekerot, in perhaps the best performance of a wonderfully well-acted film, makes him a macabre though never bizarre figure. In the film, questions are asked, facts accepted; the innocent and artist (the strolling player) sees visions and the future is his. Bergman answers what he can, though of course there remain mysteries in his film, locked doors over which he keeps jealous watch; and part of the quality of his film lies in what is not explained, in its obscure tensions and unsolved problems.

PETER JOHN DYER

# NO DOWN PAYMENT

NO DOWN PAYMENT (Fox), the story of four couples living in a suburban "development" near Los Angeles, is not so much a film as an anthology of the problems confronting middle-class Americans today. The problem of segregated housing: Herm's Japanese employee also wants to live in Sunrise Hills. Religion: will Herm go to Hell because he washes his car on Sunday morning in full view of the returning church-goers? (This is an astonishing bit of *hubris*, and it must be dearly paid for.) Alcohol: "I'm sick of myself," says Jerry, the second-hand car salesman, "drinking makes me feel like I'm somebody." Post-war readjustment: the worst day of Troy's life was the one when he put on civilian clothes. Automation: if 500 people are fired, is that David's responsibility? Almost the only problem not discussed is the one most reviewers took to be central to the film: the problem of people living too close together. But this could scarcely be the key problem for two obvious reasons. Firstly, the film's action takes place during five days—Sunday to Wednesday, plus a coda the following Sunday—and this is clearly insufficient time for people to do very much inter-acting. Secondly, there is the rape. No film dealing with the disadvantages of propinquity could honestly omit to mention its great advantage: protection against rape. If you live on top of your neighbours, you can at least always yell for help.

On second thoughts, though, the film is not perhaps so much an anthology as a gloss on David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*. The story of one of the four couples might well have been drawn from the following incident, quoted by Riesman:

> An engineer is offered the far more lucrative job of sales manager. He loves engineering, but his wife won't let him turn down the promotion. He reluctantly accepts. That night he has a dream. He has a slide-rule in his hands and he suddenly realises that he does not know how to use it. He wakes in panic. The dream clearly symbolises his feeling of impotence in a new job where he is alienated from his craft.

The film, however, goes one better. The feelings of impotence in David's case are expressed through his relation with his wife. He first experiences feelings of inadequacy when the clinch Jerry has got his wife into has to be broken up by Troy; and, later, he is incapable of punishing the man who has raped his wife. Nevertheless, her vulnerability after the rape restores his self-confidence; he tells her that he has refused the chance to become a salesman, and she, too weak (for the moment?) to protest, accepts his decision.

The story of another couple, Troy and Leola, illustrates the dangers of what Riesman calls the one-class jump. They are self-confessed "common Tennessee dirt", trying to hold their own in the gilded suburban paradise of Sunrise Hills. But their insecurities turn out to be too much for them: Leola gets drunk and belligerent at parties, Troy does not get the job of chief of police because he has not had a college education; and finally he rapes Jean presumably because she has the elusive "class" he is seeking so desperately, and to revenge himself on all those who have college degrees.

*No Down Payment* is important, it seems to me, as one of the first films to depict the change that has come over American life during the past decade, a change first formulated by Riesman in his book and epitomised in the titles of Dale Carnegie's two best-sellers: the change from *How to Win Friends and Influence People* in 1937 to *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living* in 1948. The desire for the relative security of a steady if dull job has come to be preferred to the excitements and dangers of the frontier/pioneer way of life. (Riesman calls this the change from a society dominated by "inner-directed" men who prefer a risky job with high stakes to a society dominated by "other-directed" men who prefer a safe job with correspondingly lower stakes).

Here, then, is an apology of the other-directed man, or, as the film calls him, the organisation man. Herm and David, the film's nominal heroes, are company men; Troy and Jerry are not. Jerry is ambitious, full of the spirit of free enterprise, ready to hitch his wagon to a star—or at least that is how he would have been portrayed ten years ago. Here he is shown as a snivelling, deluded drunkard. Troy, the "odd-ball" with a fine war record who doesn't want to buy on credit, who wants to become chief of police so as to prevent "punks from pushing good people off the sidewalk"—in short, a paragon of all the older American virtues—is here become a brutal, pro-Fascist rapist.

The film fails ultimately because it succumbs to the temptation of gratuitous melodrama and to the temptation to resolve *all* its problems, even if only temporarily. Nevertheless, it has considerable interest as a social document. The director, Martin Ritt

(*A Man is Ten Feet Tall*), has an eye for the significant detail and knows how to direct actors: he gets fine performances from Tony Randall, Sheree North, Pat Hingle and Cameron Mitchell, and he gets a great one from Joanne Woodward.

RICHARD ROUD.

## THE QUIET AMERICAN

GRAHAM GREENE and his agents are hardly novices in the matter of films. Mr. Greene himself was once a film critic; enough of his novels have been filmed to give him a pretty good idea of what he is doing when he sells a novel like *The Quiet American* to Hollywood. It is hard to imagine, then, what prize was sufficient to tempt him to give Joseph Mankiewicz the rights to use his name, his title and his story for a film which seems to contradict everything he intended to say in the original book.

In the novel, the first-person hero, Fowler, finds himself in moral opposition as well as amorous competition to Pyle, the quiet American. Pyle wins away Fowler's mistress, Phuong, by fair play, but with all the advantages of youth, the New World, and having saved Fowler's life. In his capacity as a newspaperman, Fowler discovers that Pyle, under cover of an American Economic Aid Mission, is smuggling arms to General Thé for the establishment of a "Third Force" in Indo-China. When the arms begin to be used, with fatal results for numbers of innocent civilians, Fowler is persuaded that his duty is to betray Pyle to General Thé's opponents, who quietly murder him and dump his body in the river mud.

Up to this point Mankiewicz—scriptwriter as well as director—follows the story with almost pedestrian fidelity. The moral conflicts, it is true, are largely suppressed, and there are small changes of detail which only later become significant. There is now no indication that Fowler is an opium addict; the Police Chief Vigot no longer reads Pascal, though a young French officer reads Lamartine. Pyle is not employed by anything so official as an Economic Aid Mission, nor does he study books with titles like *The Role of the West*. The two or three horrific little incidents which, in the novel, confirm Fowler in his loathing of war have been cleanly excised. Fowler's resentment of the material opulence and sterilised organisation of the American way of life is reduced to one incident in which he asks the American for a cigarette, and boorishly refuses the counter-offer of a whole packet.

The film only departs completely from the book, however, after Pyle's death. Mankiewicz makes Vigot, until now a minor figure, come to Fowler and reveal that it was all a Communist plot. Pyle was innocent all the time; he, Fowler, has been duped into acting as an accessory to his murder. Setting aside the inconsistency of this revelation with Pyle's insistence, earlier in the film, that the American Government so disapproves of his actions that it is having him sent back to the States, and the improbability of the Communists' hatching so involved a plot to effect the murder of one innocent and quiet American, this new denouement quite nullifies the problem Greene seemed to intend. For there is no longer any doubt of Fowler's moral position in the affair.

Inevitably the rewards and punishments are appropriate to the new situation. In the novel Fowler says: "Everything had gone right with me since he died . . .". In the film, to ensure that everything goes wrong with him, the character of Phuong, the stoical Indo-Chinese girl who leaves Fowler for Pyle and quite easily and naturally returns to him the night Pyle dies, has been forced into a more recognisably moral Western mould. Ferociously resentful, she returns to her former life as a dance hostess rather than even speak to Fowler again. The significance of the last words of the novel, which are also the last words of the film, is ironically changed: " . . . how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry."

There was an unmistakable anti-American feeling about Greene's novel, and it was predictable that an American—even working in Rome and Saigon—might be tempted into distortions. But to have treated the novel in this audacious manner must elicit a kind of admiration. It seems a much more clever way to impose an ideology to redirect the writings of its critics rather than to suppress them directly, as is the custom of Catholics or Communists, for example. And the method is all the more effective when it is practised by a director as skilled as Mankiewicz and a principal actor as talented as Michael Redgrave, whose interpretation of the aging and over-sensitive newspaperman goes far to compensate for the rather negative performances of Audie Murphy and Giorgia Moll.

DAVID ROBINSON

*Moment of betrayal: Michael Redgrave and Audie Murphy in "The Quiet American".*

## CALABUCH

OF the two Spanish directors to make their mark recently in the international scene, Luis G. Berlanga has been represented here only by two relatively light-weight pictures: *Welcome Mr. Marshall* (co-scripted with Bardem) and now *Calabuch* (Curzon). Despite its success at the Venice Festival of 1956, Berlanga is reported to have been dissatisfied with *Calabuch*; and although directors are notoriously unreliable critics of their own work, one is inclined to feel that he is right. It starts with the advantage of a slight but promising situation. A small Spanish fishing village becomes host to a friendly, eccentric old man who easily adjusts himself to the villagers' unpredictable ways and devotes his talents to the provision of bigger and better fireworks displays. The stranger is in fact Professor Hamilton, an atomic scientist intent on escape from a world which only seeks his knowledge for destructive purposes. But the idyll is brief: authority steps in and the reluctant scientist is persuaded to return to civilisation and the atom.

This little fable is developed by Berlanga in the style of post-war Italian neo-realist comedy (it was in fact a Spanish-Italian co-production), with a dash of Ealing's homely regional fun. The director is affectionate towards his characters and their ways: the amateur bull-fighter with a tired, tame bull, the villagers gleefully participating in the fireworks and resorting to absurd stratagems when their friend's personal security is threatened. Although all this is mildly enjoyable, in the *Welcome Mr. Marshall* style, neither script nor direction is inventive enough to make it really funny, or really sharp in its ironies. One is left with a cosy, gentle, slightly underdeveloped entertainment, with a light coating of satire and social comment. Edmund Gwenn, as the professor, gives a sentimentalised and slightly monotonous performance (dubbing, of course, considerably reduces his personality); Valentina Cortese is charming in the minor part of the local schoolmarm. The film's editing style is consistently sharp; even so, the continuity in this British version (shortened by about five minutes) is often confusingly abrupt, the general breathlessness leaving an impression that several feet have been removed from all the main scenes.

Critics are sometimes inclined to find a director's best work in the films they do not know. In Berlanga's case, however, it does seem that his most personal films are not the two comedies we have seen in England. Like Bardem, he has been brought by his radical outlook into conflict with the Church and the stern Spanish censorship, with the result that several projects have been interrupted or never realised. It would be interesting, though, to see his early period piece *Novio a la Vista*, or his recent *Thursday Miracles*,

a village parable which seems to have undergone numerous vicissitudes in the way of cutting and re shooting. Clearly he is a director of talent, though a talent that cannot yet be seen in a clear perspective.

JOHN GILLETT

## In Brief

**WILD IS THE WIND** (*Paramount*). Anna Magnani and Anthony Quinn are both players who live easily on the grand emotional scale; they have never subscribed to any acting theory which seeks to scale down human behaviour for fear of looking theatrical on the screen. In *Wild is the Wind* they give dominating performances, and it is not their fault that the passions and tantrums in which the film involves them leave us finally unmoved. Played in some superb natural settings—against the high, wide sky and the distant ranges of snug hills—the story concerns a rich Nevada widower who decides to marry the sister of his dead wife and summons her from her native Italy to his ranch. She arrives, a sort of Italian Mrs. de Winter, to find her happiness menaced by her husband's devotion to the memory of his dead wife and by a resentful housekeeper. Driven by her husband's obsession, she accepts the advances of his adopted son (Anthony Franciosa). Discovery and emotional fireworks follow; but the script separates its two protagonists, leaving them to sulk separately in study or car, at the moment when they should come closer, should tear their salvation from each other or else destroy themselves. Tamely, the film ends on an unlikely airport reconciliation.

An early scene shows the director, George Cukor, at his most perceptive. The clumsy, egomaniac husband gustily drives his wife into her house, where, after a bewildering flurry of noise in a language she does not understand, smothered with anonymous kisses of welcome, she is installed without ceremony at the meal table. Her confusion and sense of isolation mount to panic, and she suddenly darts from the table to the dog outside, who had offered her the only welcome she understood. Tactful and moving, this scene clearly establishes the tensions and lack of mutual sympathies. Later, there is an inventive and affecting exposition of the methods by which the husband, bluff, pious and self-made, tries to force the lives of those around him into the moulds he considers befitting. The wife, moved to rapt admiration of the wild horses, begs her husband to give her one. When he does so, it is harnessed, tamely drawing a little trap, its spirit broken. Gino is incapable of imaginatively interpreting anyone else's desires: he interprets for them, and he is always wrong.

These are good and original scenes, magnificently played. But a limp last half-hour, a treacly theme tune (by Dimitri Tiomkin) and some banal minor characterisations prevent the film from being exceptional, even in its genre. A particular tactless lapse is worth mentioning, as an illustration of a growing tendency. Ten minutes or so after the opening, with the film's tone well established, we are suddenly presented with the credit titles, over which an abysmal ballad is crooned: "Oh my darling, cling to me, for we are creatures of the wind". We are not, and it is a shockingly mis-timed intervention.—DEREK PROUSE.

*"Wild is the Wind".*
*Anna Magnani and Anthony Quinn.*

**BONJOUR TRISTESSE** (*Columbia*), with its Françoise Sagan label, Saul Bass credits and St. Tropez sun-tan, is nothing if not fashionable. It has been faithfully, even ponderously, adapted by Arthur Laurents, who has succeeded in capturing the novel's essential morbidity and narrowness. There is not much plot, but a fair amount of swimming, sunning, café-crawling, street-dancing by night and visits to the casino—all ritualistic episodes in an unconsummated affair between Raymond (David Niven), a rich widower, and his sixteen-year-old daughter Cecile (Jean Seberg). He has his mistresses, she encourages them while keeping her own persistent admirer (Geoffrey Horne) at arm's length, and nobody is allowed to invade their sickly cocoon of mutual protection. It needs the equally neurotic demands of a third person to shatter the cocoon: the intruder is Anne (Deborah Kerr), a successful dress designer whose fierce determination to retain order in her life conceals a repressed and frightened compulsion to security. Anne agrees to marry Raymond, insists Cecile must return to school; and now father and daughter can only "consummate" their weird love by obliquely engineering Anne's death.

All this is as modish as yesterday's top U.S. pop tune, and needless to say seems a good deal older. On occasion it even contrives to look German. There are passages right out of an Elisabeth Bergner movie: notably the betrayal scene, when the elfin, androgynous young girl trips silently through the pines to spy on her hated rival. Equally reminiscent is the final close-up of Cecile, her act of destruction done, gazing into the dressing-table mirror and vainly trying to rub suffering into that baby-face with skin-food. Otto Preminger's direction, stolid, chromium-plated, top-heavy with flashbacks, emphasises the Germanic flavour and thereby achieves a bizarre symbiosis with those despairing Parisian refrains which derive superficially from Cocteau: fear of life, hints of incest, infantilism, Cecile scrawling on her slate, the equation of marriage with death, the fatal car accident, Juliette Greco's singing of the title song.

It is not perhaps as repulsive as it sounds, mainly because Preminger has distilled the wrong kind of over-heated quality. Instead of languishing in the enclosed and artificial torpor of a hot-house, the film relaxes gratefully under a Mediterranean sky. Admittedly, it is difficult to present in the cinema something that is allusively and sensuously atmospheric—an anecdote that is not held firm within a strong narrative structure. If this kind of project is to succeed, you need a talent for mood and concentration, and a broad understanding of the decadent literary tradition. Here, despite the Cocteau accents, script and direction fall disastrously short. There is not nearly enough of that rich, leisured, exotic perversity—Rimbaud's *délicatesse de perdre la vie*—necessary to raise the film above the level of a post-mortem.

In the circumstances the actors, almost all British, can hardly be blamed for sitting squarely on the fence, toying politely with their euphemisms. Deborah Kerr does at least provide one moment of cruel poignancy, when Anne stumbles on Raymond in the act of reviving an old liaison; and there are three good bit-performances from Martita Hunt, as a vulturine harridan, Jean Kent as a smirking, pudding-faced bitch, and Roland Culver as her mordant, cuckolded husband.—PETER JOHN DYER.

**VIOLENT PLAYGROUND** (*Rank*) purports to show the work of Liverpool's Junior Liaison Officers, who since 1949, have guided young first offenders with such success that the scheme has been copied by police forces throughout the country and abroad. An opening title points out that over 92 per cent of potential delinquents who have been dealt with under the scheme have not committed a second crime. Unhappily, though, the rock'n'roll background to the credits proves a truer guide to what follows. The Liaison scheme is used largely as a pretext for a conventional exercise of the "mixed-up kid" school. A detective sergeant (Stanley Baker), investigating a series of apparently unmotivated arson cases, is transferred against his will to Juvenile Liaison. The petty larceny committed by two young twins leads to his acquaintance and eventual romance with their sister (Anne Heywood) and to the discovery that their brother Johnny (David McCallum) is the leader of the arson gang.

Although the unit went to considerable trouble to shoot sequences in Liverpool locations, the film communicates little impression of the life of the city, let alone of its tenements. The script, by James Kennaway, a novelist new to the screen, also lacks real feeling or sensitivity in presenting the factors that cause and encourage delinquency. Rock'n'roll is cited as the main cause of the trouble, particularly in a sequence in which Johnny, returning home to find an all-boy dance session in progress, abandons himself to the music to such effect that he leads the gang in a menacing advance on the sergeant.

For the first two-thirds or so, Basil Dearden's direction seems mainly an echo of contemporary Hollywood: the gang, for example, are much closer to the pupils of *Blackboard Jungle* than to the Liverpool Teddy Boys intended. In the film's final sequences, Johnny takes refuge in a school, holding the children as hostages. This section of the film is very competently made, with tension sustained at an unusually high level. But one cannot ignore the essential falsity of the situation, nor the deliberate whipping up of the audience's hatred for Johnny to prepare them for what is really the film's final attitude and message—"you can feel too sorry for Johnny". Surely the time for such a sentiment has hardly yet been reached? One wonders, too, how far such an outlook reflects the approach of the Liaison Officers themselves.

Of the principal players, only David McCallum suggests that he might deserve a part in the film which *Violent Playground* could and should have been, though Anne Heywood makes a dogged attempt at the almost unplayable part of Cathie, the sister torn by divided loyalties. In minor parts, Peter Cushing presents a sanctimonious priest and Clifford Evans a headmaster whimsically named 'Heaven'. Altogether, *Violent Playground* seems a sadly wasted opportunity: a highly experienced director and a young writer, approaching a topical subject of real potentialities, have found in it mainly the familiar material for melodrama.

DEREK HILL

**INNOCENT SINNERS** (*Rank*), an adaptation of Rumer Godden's novel *Episode of Sparrows*, concerns three children but is really the study of one—Lovejoy Mason, lonely and neglected 13-year-old daughter of a wandering bawd, and sharply at odds with the grey London suburb where she lodges with a restaurant-owner and his wife. On a deserted bomb-site she makes a secret flower garden; when this is wrecked by a street-gang, Tip, the gang's sympathetic leader, helps her to rebuild it. But the new site (amid the rubble of a ruined church) lacks earth; and the children, aided by a small boy, make nightly raids on a nearby residential square to steal soil for the secret garden.

This is the central theme of a well-meaning, uneven and somewhat meandering film. A string of sub-plots, although relevant, never quite come coherently together. As might be expected from the director, Philip Leacock, the children's scenes are by far the firmest, well played by June Archer, Christopher Hey and Brian Hammond, and directed with delicate care. The adults (Flora Robson, David Kossoff, Catherine Lacey) stand oddly apart and their playing, by contrast, appears not a little confected. The weakest aspect of the film, though, is its inability to bring to life its background—the dirty, overcrowded London suburb, where busy working-class streets adjoin an upper-class area of tree-lined walks and squares. A weird mixture of location material (Battersea and Victoria) hardly helps here. Despite these flaws, though, *Innocent Sinners* has a kind of awkward sincerity about it: it is a film whose intentions go beyond its achievement. JOHN CUTTS.

# Television

## GETTING IT ACROSS

ONE of the more curious beliefs of modern British society is that while young persons, however unwilling, must be actively taught, at every possible opportunity, it is very rude indeed to try to teach people anything after they reach the age of twenty or so. That is why the popular press and television tend to be so embarrassed if they have to put over anything serious, and will generally Old Codger it or apologise it out of existence. In these circumstances, it is rather cheering when, as occasionally happens, someone uses television drama for the sake of argument, and not just for sensation—uses, in fact, the traditional (if largely forgotten) technique of propagandising through entertainment. J. B. Priestley's recent play *Doomsday for Dyson*, for example, turned out to be an all-out piece of pamphleteering for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, with which Mr. Priestley is closely identified; and the hour put at his disposal was, in television time, a pretty large contribution to the Campaign on the part of Granada Television.

In fact, the play was rather disappointing. It seemed to have been run up very quickly, and then cut down by fifteen minutes no less rapidly, to make room for an equally-balanced debate (appended, probably, to fulfil the statutory demands of television's "impartiality"). *Doomsday for Dyson* lacked the broad simplicity of really effective polemic; the Priestley choruses must have rather obscured the point for the casual and unprejudiced viewer. Nor was the conclusion very clear; the only apparent moral offered to the most willing convert was an exhortation to attend public meetings. Even so, the play must have made some points. It held the attention, and there was no doubting the general trend of its argument. A devastating caricature of a Prime Minister who had apparently modelled his style on that of another Prime Minister has probably undermined a good many future political broadcasts.

The question is, of course, just how effective can be the influence of such broadcasts. Certainly, if Priestley's arguments lacked the lucidity of, say, a talk by Bertrand Russell, it is fairly safe to assume that a somewhat sensational play like this will hold more viewers than a mere philosopher, however great and ancient. Priestley at least edged a word into the millions of ears. It is another question whether the word counted for much, sandwiched between *Jack Hylton's Monday Show* and *Murder Bag*. The *Daily Mail* conducted a rapid Gallup Poll immediately after the broadcast, and reported that over two-thirds of the viewers agreed with Priestley about the Bomb; and that almost as many felt that plays of this sort were a Good Thing. None of the *Mail's* findings, however, provided any evidence as to whether anyone had actually been converted by Priestley's propagandising. Guessing, it seems justifiable to assume that this kind of attack could only be really successful in a cumulative effect. Meanwhile, though, it is at least exhilarating to find television being used as a medium for such full-blooded and contemporary political polemic.

DAVID ROBINSON

*Joris Ivens: "The Seine Meets Paris".*

# JORIS IVENS

## *social realist versus lyric poet*

CYNTHIA GRENIER

JORIS IVENS, known for nearly thirty years as a social documentarist, and more recently as one of the leading propagandist film-makers for Communism, is suddenly, unmistakably, revealed as one of the cinema's outstanding lyric poets in his latest and entirely non-political film, *The Seine Meets Paris.*

One of Ivens' earliest films, *Rain* (1929), was described by French critics as a *ciné-poème.* Ivens himself has said of it: "Its structure is actually more that of a poem than a piece of prose, such as the structure of *The Bridge* [his first film]. Its object—which is to show the face of a city, Amsterdam, changing in a shower of rain—was handled as a poet or musician might treat it rather than as a reporter would. The film opens in the sunlight on houses and canals and the people in the streets. A slight wind rises and the first drops of rain splash into the canals. The shower comes down harder and under the protection of capes and umbrellas the people move more quickly about their business. The shower ends. The last drops fall, the light has changed, and the city's life returns to normal. The only continuity in *Rain* is the beginning, progress and end of this shower of rain. Its effects were intended as purely visual. The actors are the rain, the raindrops, wet people, dark clouds, glistening reflections moving over wet asphalt. The diffused light on the dark houses along the black canals produced an effect that I never expected. And the whole film gives the spectator a very personal and subjective vision, as in the lines of Verlaine:

*'Il pleure dans mon coeur*
*Comme il pleut sur la ville. . . .'* "

Ivens' latest film is equally a poetic evocation, also showing the face of a city, Paris, as touched by the great river flowing through its centre. One has only to read Ivens' scenario to see that he has lost none of his poetic sense. "It is very early in the morning, before sunrise. A little wind. Heavily loaded barges, low in the water, glide slowly with the current. The Seine caresses its steep, grassy banks. The trees greet her with their trembling leaves. She passes a chateau, a garden, farms, peasants going to their fields. The sky is pale. The wind makes ripples on the surface of the water. A man, on a black barge, sings softly. The Seine is feeling good. She does not know what is waiting for her. A train runs along the bank

of the Seine, breaking into her innocent tranquillity."

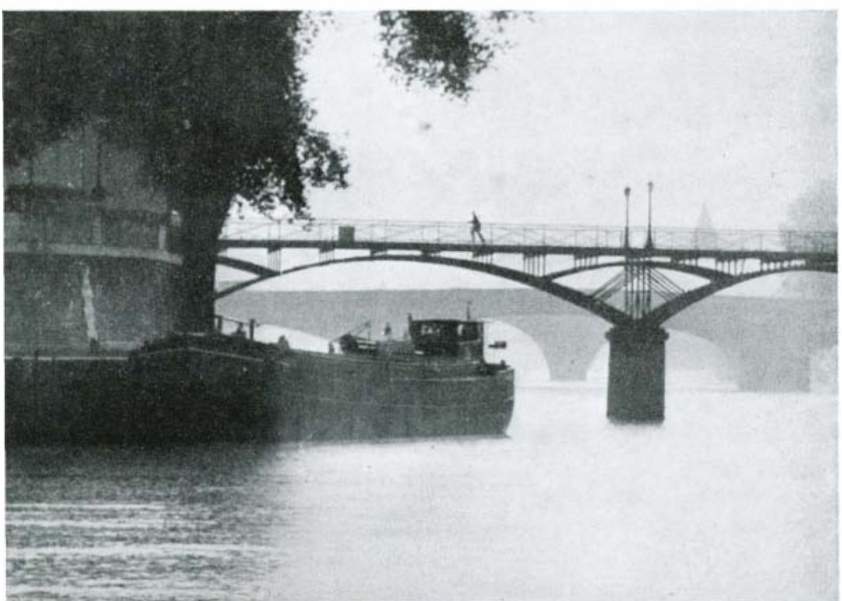
The film is one of the most tender, charming, moving and accurate pictures ever made about Paris. The spirit of the river, the special quality of light and atmosphere which is peculiarly that of Paris, comes across with great directness and simplicity. Largely shot with a hidden camera, its actors are the workers, children, lovers, students, *clochards*, tourists and ordinary citizens living, working, resting on the banks of the Seine. The river itself flows smoothly along, sometimes dappled by the summer sun through leaves, sometimes pockmarked by a brisk, angry rain.

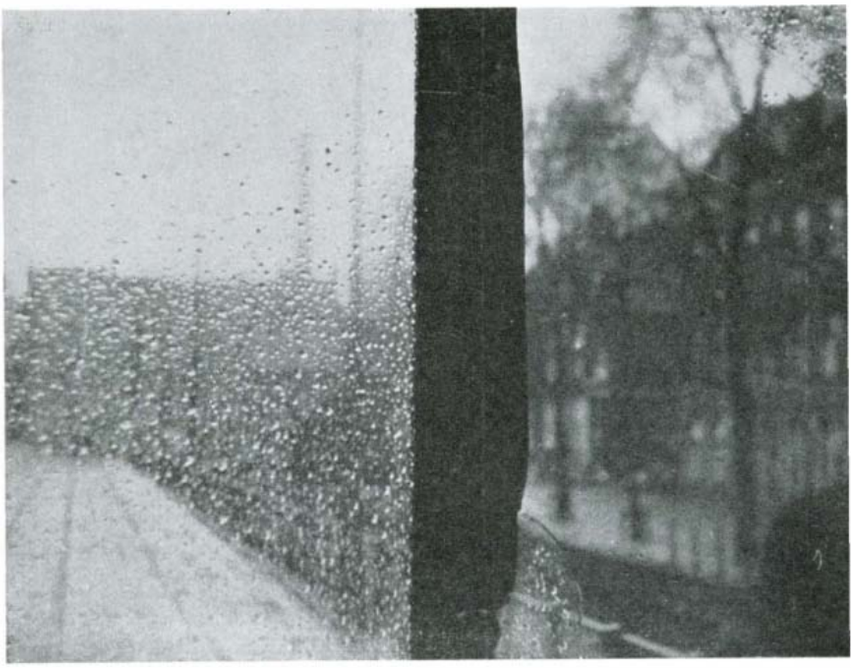
The images are supported by a touching and appropriately lyrical score by Philippe Gérard and a commentary in the form of a poem by Jacques Prévert, read by Serge Reggiani. Prévert saw the film only once before sitting down and writing the commentary. Although this was something of a tribute to its inspirational quality, it presented Ivens with certain problems in editing, since Prévert's lines would on occasion be in direct opposition to the images. Eventually, however, the synchronisation was most successfully worked out. The final lines of the poem are:—

*'Il était une fois la Seine*
*Il était une fois*
*Il était une fois l'amour*
*Il était une fois le malheur*
*Et une autre fois l'oubli*
*Il était une fois la Seine*
*Il était une fois la vie'.*

On the line "Et une autre fois l'oubli", the screen is dark with just a thread of light from the locks outside the city; and as the locks open wide on the Seine, flowing wide through the countryside, we hear, "Il était une fois la vie".

Seeing *Rain* and *The Seine Meets Paris*, it is curious and even perhaps a little disturbing to realise that nearly thirty years separate two films which, except for details of dress, might almost in spirit and style have been made within a few years of each other. One can see, certainly, that Ivens has grown more concerned with the human, social content of films. *The Seine Meets Paris* is perhaps "warmer", less abstract, more technically advanced than *Rain*; but still it is quite clear that the same eye and brain conceived both. In almost all Ivens' films of the intervening years, there are passages marked by his very considerable lyric talent. If we look at *Zuyderzee*, we can find the poetry of the conquest of nature—the reclamation of land from the sea—and the poetry of the growing wheat and its harvest. In *Song of the Rivers*, despite its heavy burden of propagandist content, some of which Ivens himself is not happy about today, there is the poetry of manual labour, of machines, of vast public work constructions. Even in *Spanish Earth*, there is a touch of the poetry of infantry warfare—vastly accentuated, of course, by Ernest Hemingway's commentary—with combat patrols in the Spanish Civil War going forward "into that intimate loneliness called contact."





*"Rain" (1929).*

Ivens himself is a man of simplicity, charm and energy. His very humane qualities, his concern with social misfortune and injustice, linked with a certain sense of guilt at being the son of a well-to-do family and also with the desire to do something constructive in the broad social sense, led him into the camp of the far Left. During his years of association with the Left, he has been feted and cherished and given causes to fight for with his films. The question is, what this has meant in terms of Ivens' creative talent.

2

Joris Ivens was born in Nijmegen, near the banks of the Rhine—which may conceivably explain in part his great interest in all forms of water, rivers, rain. He represented the third generation of his family to be concerned with photography. As Ivens once wrote, describing his family: "My grandfather had started the business with the invention that Daguerre had generously given to anyone who wanted to work with it. With this invention, he made those penetrating portraits of quiet, sober people where pose and expression counted for more than melodrama and originality. His son, who was my father, studied the further developments of photography to establish a broader commercial basis, selling apparatus and photographic materials and beginning a chain of camera shops. There was never any question but that I would follow him in the business, so from my first hour I was tied to photography."

Ivens was sent to Rotterdam College of Economics, where he acquired a "working notion of trade relations, international banking systems, the functions of trusts and cartels and, most of all, the interdependence of all countries in the world." Apart from this business training, it was necessary for him to have some technical knowledge of photography; and in 1922 he went to Germany, to the University of Charlottenburg. About this Ivens wrote: "Charlottenburg is a suburb of Berlin, so that when I think of the value of those years at the University I am really thinking of the tremendous impression that post-war Berlin made on me as much as I am thinking of my work. Four years after the armistice, Berlin was an exciting place to be, both in a good way and in a bad way. . . ." His first job was in Dresden, at the camera

*"The Seine Meets Paris" (1957).*

le cours de la bosse

des fortunes de bouteilles et de verre brisé

des trésors de ferraille rouillée

de vieux lits cages abandonnés

ré-cu-pé-rés

La Seine

c'est une usine

même quand c'est la fraîcheur

c'est toujours le labeur

La Seine

C'est une chanson qui coule source

elle a la voix de la jeunesse

dit une amoureuse en souriant

une amoureuse du Vert-Galant

Une amoureuse de l'île des cygnes

se dit la même chose en rêvant

La Seine

je la connais comme si je l'avais faite

dit un pilote de remorqueur au bleu de chauffe

tout bariolé

tout bariolé de mazout et de soleil et de fumée

Un jour elle est folle de son corps

elle appelle ça le mascaret

le lendemain elle roupille comme un loir

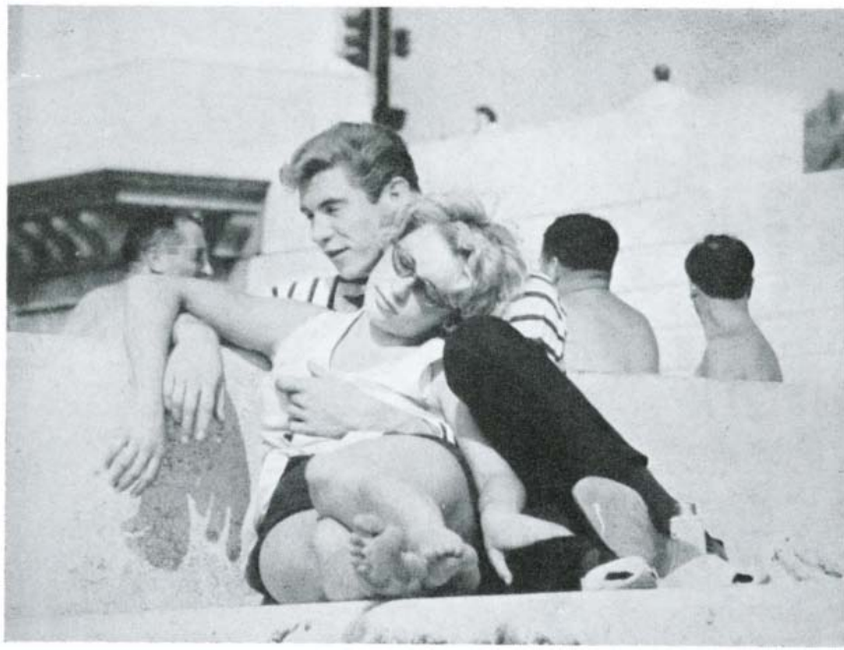
factories of Ica and Ernemann. "I worked there as a day labourer, and for the first time I realised physically what it means to be a worker, living within a small salary and working within a huge organisation. In the State of Saxony the labour unions were having a really tough struggle for existence. The minimum demands they were making were clear to me and I saw the need and justification for them. I marched in demonstrations in the streets of Dresden when the demonstrating workers were shot at by the police. I knew and felt very strongly that the workers were in the right. They were fighting the first fights in Germany against fascism."

This, of course, helps to explain how Ivens arrived at his political position. But still his life is not just the story of a great documentarist who on occasion, because of his political beliefs, has accepted or written scenarios not worthy of him. There seems to be something more to it than that; and one feels that Ivens' career is to some extent an illustration of the debilitating effect that abstract conceptual thinking can sometimes have on artistic creation. Essentially ideas, *per se*, cannot make a work of art. This is something that Ivens himself must surely recognise. He nonetheless clearly feels that the possession of great, noble and absolutely true ideas and convictions is an inestimable advantage to the artist and should be evidenced by his work. His writings, lectures, and what he says in conversation leave no doubt of this. Perhaps the first example he would quote of a great director possessed by such ideas would be Eisenstein. But Eisenstein's own talents were for the heroic, the epic, the historic, the monumental. The Russian Revolution provided him not only with ideas but with the artistic material to go with them, at least during his early creative period. And for those who do not subscribe to Leninism, as for those who do, his films are a majestic humanist achievement.

Ivens, in his own bout with ideology, was not so fortunate. His talents could hardly be more remote from those of an Eisenstein. A romantic naturalist having a good deal in common with Flaherty, a lyricist, a lover of the simple, unheroic, ordinary things of nature and ordinary living—fields, clouds, men working on barges in the summer sunlight, couples strolling by the river in the evening—it would have been hard for him to have found an ideology that could have provided him with a structure for this.

Nevertheless, Ivens did adopt an ideology, with all its political principles. It was Marxism-Leninism, as it happened, but from the point of view of his creative work Free Enterprise or No Taxation Without Representation might have been no better. If we compare any one of his social realist documentaries, whether made for the U.S. Department of Agriculture or for the Iron Curtain countries (leaving aside the obvious political considerations), we find the worn clichés of liberal or Communist conceptual thinking. There are none of the concrete minutiae that characterise the true artistic creation. Compare all Ivens' films of this genre—with the possible exception of *Borinages*—with one of Franju's, *Poussières*, for instance. In none of them do we find the angry, passionate, accurate representation of the misery and privation of men who work as we do in Franju. In Franju's film there is not a single cliché—visual or spoken—on the fate of the oppressed: Franju is anarchistic, compulsive, neurotic; Ivens is serene, balanced, mature. It would be too facile a solution to dismiss the problem by saying that a great artist is a neurotic one; so the comparison between the two film-makers had better be dropped at this point.

Ivens' concern with the human condition undoubtedly gave him a driving force, a desire to make films in the hope of ameliorating man's social lot. But in so doing, he by-passed



*"The Seine Meets Paris".*

his own very great gift for much of the time, and lent his name and talents to much easy propaganda, often unworthy of his intelligence. We need only look at *Song of the Rivers* (scenario by Vladimir Pozner, visuals by Ivens, music by Shostakovitch, words by Brecht, songs sung by Paul Robeson) to see where his social conscience was capable of leading him, under the conviction that he was serving a political cause. We have a shot of Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, being bombed. The commentary: "Workers of Warsaw, doesn't this remind you of something? Remember when *your* city was destroyed by military aggressors?" And the United States, present-day America enjoying a prosperity bewildering in its profusion and unpredicted by even the most wild-eyed utopian capitalist, is represented in the film by a few ancient and faded shots, *circa* 1920, of Negroes in cotton mills; and a few more of a riot in the North—possibly not even political—in which the police are wearing uniforms that have not been in use for over thirty years. The accompanying commentary could hardly be applied to any event in the history of American labour since the Pullman Strike of 1894. And Ivens lived in the United States; he travelled throughout the country and knew what was negative about it. He must know that what he put in *Song of the Rivers* was not what he saw or knew about the United States.

Apart from *Song of the Rivers*, with its often arrant dishonesty, the rest of his social realist pictures—*The 400,000,000*, *Spanish Earth*, *The Power and the Land*, *The Russian Front*, *Indonesia Calling*, *The First Years*—are all competent documentaries, with occasional passages of lyricism. But they are no more than competent; and from a man who has one of the greatest camera-eyes in the world, this is scarcely enough. Despite the shock of the 20th Congress, followed by Hungary, Ivens is now going back to Communist China to teach and film for nearly a year before returning to Paris. *The Seine Meets Paris* seems to mark a turning-point in his career; but it cannot be assumed that his "social realist" period is over.

This is the story of a man who may seem to have confused ideas with art, and whose personal talents as a film-maker did not really suit the ideas he had chosen for himself. "Five ideas can swallow a man", wrote E. E. Cummings. Fortunately, Joris Ivens really had one idea, and in *The Seine Meets Paris* is proof that he escaped being swallowed.

*OPPOSITE PAGE: an extract from the poem by Jacques Prévert which forms the commentary of "The Seine Meets Paris", with Joris Ivens' working notes.*

# Below the threshold

by BRIAN FOSS

IN 1951 Francis Williams wrote a novel called *The Richardson Story*. It was about a scientist who invented a technique for broadcasting slogans without the listeners actually hearing anything. The effects were powerful, amounting to something like mass hypnosis, and the story is largely concerned with the possible uses of the technique for promoting international goodwill. In the last two years public interest in such techniques has been aroused by press reports of increased sales of ice cream and popcorn in an American cinema, supposedly caused by subliminal (below threshold) advertising. Partly as a result of these reports, market research organisations in this country have been experimenting with these techniques, but results are treated with a secrecy that an atomic research establishment might be proud of. The grapevine does not select hearsay from fact, and there is no doubt that many public pronouncements on subliminal advertising are based on hearsay.

It has been known for fifty years that people's behaviour can be affected by stimulation of which they know nothing, and several techniques exist for doing this. That used by the hero of Williams' novel is one of the least tried. It should perhaps be called supraliminal stimulation, since the propaganda was in the form of ultrasonic speech—normal speech relayed several octaves too high so as to be above the limits of audible pitch (but perhaps audible to a dog). In the 1930's some experiments had been done in this country which claimed that people could guess correctly what tune was being played in just such a supraliminal fashion. Possibly these experiments suggested the theme of the novel.

A different technique was used in the earliest experiments by psychologists. Some of these showed that after-images could be obtained from invisible colours. A patch of light faintly coloured red, which would normally have been seen as just red, was in fact seen as white if the redness was very gradually introduced. Subjects adapted to the redness in the same way that one adapts to a red light in a photographic dark room, so that it tends gradually to be drained of its colour. If the apparently white light was suddenly switched off, a green after-image was often seen—the after-image normally associated with red light. The redness in the white light had been subliminal, but it had had its effect.

Some of the most interesting experiments were done as a control for experiments in telepathy. In many demonstrations of telepathy, the "receiver" was in the same room as the "transmitter" with the pictures which were to be "transmitted". Some psychologists argued that the "receiver" might be getting clues unwittingly from subliminal stimulation, and one experiment showed that this was probably true. The subjects in the experiment were asked to look at a screen while guessing which of five geometric figures the experimenter was "transmitting". One of the five figures was projected on to the screen from behind, but so faintly that nothing could be discerned; yet, over many trials, subjects guessed the projected figure more often than could be expected from chance. Of course, a control experiment was done to make sure that the results were not due to telepathy!

Most scientifically respectable experiments that have been published have been of this kind. Many of them show that subliminal stimulation can affect guesses, but the effects can be seen only when large samples of data are treated statistically. None of these experiments has suggested that behaviour could be drastically influenced. If it could, then our lives would be intolerably governed by things which are just out of sight, or voices which are just inaudible.

Such experiments show that stimulation may be strong enough to affect the nervous system, but not so strong that the receiver is conscious of it. There are several snags about using such a technique in advertising. One is that the range in strength of stimulation between what will influence the nervous system and what is perceptible is rather small (it differs from sense to sense), and the range probably decreases with age; so that it is difficult to adjust the stimulus strength within suitable limits. Another snag is that people differ in the absolute values of their thresholds, so that a stimulus which is subliminal to one person may be perceptible to another. It can be imagined that, if some members of a cinema audience actually saw advertisements which were intended to be subliminal, the results might be catastrophic and perhaps hilarious.

It is sometimes possible to overcome these difficulties. Norman Dixon, of University College, London, has recently reported an experiment in which a technique of this kind gave positive results. Travel brochures were displayed in two places at the entrance of a building. Both places were indicated by a piece of black paper, but on one piece the words "Take One" were printed subliminally. More brochures were taken from here than from the other place—until the words on the paper faded!

The more sensational announcements, however, have reported a different technique. This uses a stimulus which is strong enough to be seen, but which is exposed only for a brief time interval, too brief to allow recognition of the slogan and possibly too brief to allow the flash to be seen. The technique was first used by psychologists in the hope that what people reported of such fleeting glimpses might show up some of the fundamental happenings in perception. In the last few years it has acquired notoriety in the investigation of what has been called "perceptual defence". The suggestion is that viewers defend themselves against certain ideas (obscene ideas have been used in some experiments) and consequently are slow at seeing words associated with these ideas. The results on this are conflicting, but one experiment shows fairly clearly that nonsense syllables which have been paired with electric shock can, when briefly flashed on a screen, make a person sweat (measured by a change in electrical resistance of the skin) even when he cannot identify the letters being flashed. This flashing technique again has a snag for advertising. On occasion a viewer may identify words correctly even when they are exposed for as little as one two-hundredth of a second. If a slogan occupies one frame of a film (about a seventy-fifth of a second), it is likely to be spotted by many in the audience, especially if it be repeated, and with the slow scanning of television the situation is worse. It is of course possible to combine this technique with the first and use weak intensity flashes; or, in the case of films, a second projector can be used with a shutter which will allow projection of a slogan for a very brief time interval, superimposed on the main film. This second technique is probably the most tried.

The results are rather surprising. In several cases, as a result of flashing a slogan in this way, the sales of a product have been significantly decreased. In different circumstances they may increase, but it is possible that the determining circumstances are not completely known. It is to be hoped that potential users are aware of the possibility of getting the reverse result. The *Sunday Times* recently reported that a

Los Angeles television station is to broadcast subliminally "exhortations of a blameless nature", like "Drive Safely" and "Go to Church". The *Sunday Times* is only too right in suggesting that the station is playing with fire.

In any case, it is probably not yet known how extensively behaviour can be modified by using these techniques. The positive results suggest that a person's decision can be facilitated by subliminal stimulation if he already has half a mind to do whatever it is; which is probably the state of mind most people are in over many advertisers' wares. It is reasonable too that such a technique might be used to heighten climaxes in a film, as has been suggested. That it can facilitate responses was shown in some experiments reported by the writer in 1950, in which subjects solved anagrams more rapidly when the correct solution was flashed at them subliminally.

Why have advertisers taken such interest in these methods? It has been said on occasion that invisible commercials are preferable to visible ones in that they do not occupy viewing time or distract the viewer. This seems a little specious. The main reason is that, by putting over commercials "subconsciously", the viewer will be caught with his defences down. The line is that, if you are conscious of something, you can resist it; if not, you cannot.

That advertisers should be able to get at one, defenceless and utterly gullible, is indeed frightening; and it is understandable that there should have been something of an outcry against the possibility. At least we usually know that an advertisement is trying to sell us something; and even if it succeeds we can tell ourselves that we could have resisted it if we had really wanted to. Perhaps resistances to subliminal pressure would develop. They might take the form of always refusing to buy the product first thought of, just in case the idea had been implanted; and even though that product happened to be the best.

It might be that public opinion has been roused by the wider issue: that our behaviour can be influenced by things we are not aware of, whether manipulated by advertisers or not. This is a less reasonable stand to take, since a little thought shows that every moment of our lives we are affected by the unnoticed. The most basic patterns of behaviour—breathing, walking, not falling over, not banging into things—are governed by stimulation which we do not attend to, much of it subliminal; and at higher levels even our thinking is often steered by things we do not consciously notice (why have you that particular tune on the brain?). Ordinary above-threshold advertising works in this way: it can be effective even when we don't notice it.

No—it is more likely that the resentment springs from the idea that someone is manipulating a public which remains ignorant of the manipulations. It smacks of hypnosis, but worse, since it is usually possible to refuse to be hypnotised. Francis Williams assumed in his novel that these techniques could be as powerful as hypnosis; probably he was wrong. However, public opinion has been sufficiently strong for the president of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising to state, last October, that "until more is known about this subject" any use of subliminal advertising would be considered a grave breach of the Institute's code of behaviour; and three American television networks have stated that they will not use it. The question remains: how to discover if it is being used?

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# Book Reviews

## ROTHA ON THE FILM: a Selection of Writings about the Cinema. Illustrated. (Faber and Faber, 30s.)

PAUL ROTHA HAS ALWAYS been the most pugnacious and polemical writer among the British documentary film-makers, and easily the most prolific. It is not altogether surprising, then, that apart from his books, his occasional writings over the past thirty years add up to the not inconsiderable total of fifteen hundred, or an average of one a week. In this anthology, he reprints about seventy of them—articles, reviews, memoranda, programme notes and lectures—from sources as diverse as the old *Film Weekly* and the *Museum Association's Journal*, *Tribune* and *The Times*. Putting together this sort of collection must, to be interesting, be in some degree an act of self-revelation, a form of autobiography, an "apologia pro vita sua." Though it contains a certain amount of material that scarcely merits hard covers, *Rotha on the Film* does tell us rather a lot in the end about one of the two or three most famous intellectuals of the British cinema.

Here then are the seven ages of Rotha, or at least some of them. First, the infant, seeing the Delhi Durbar in Kinemacolor and a John Bunny comedy before World War One. Then the adolescent, attending the Film Society's first performance in 1925. The real interest, however, begins with a short article written in 1928 (at about the age of 21), when, after the Slade, he had found his way into the studios. It is an altogether admirable piece of writing—terse, eager, well-argued, scornful of British practices and full of a youthful erudition—and ends resoundingly with: "[the film] is without question the greatest art-form yet discovered for the pleasure of mankind." This article on *Technique of the Art Director*, he tells us, got him the immediate sack. Two years later, this extraordinary young man is putting forward a statesmanlike plea, in the genteel phraseology needed for the staid columns of *The Connoisseur*, for a national film museum. This was some years before Messieurs Langlois and Franju began their campaign for a Cinémathèque, before the National Film Library was created, and a world movement born which today makes it possible for youngsters in London, Paris and New York to taste the enchantments of the early cinema. Rotha had already begun assembling his celebrated collection of many thousands of film stills. Of this, and of the pre-war days of the "unusual" film movement, he reminisces entertainingly in articles written years later. His stills are now in the National Film Archive, but a "few old favourites" he has retained. These provide some of the illustrations for the book: the two Garbo stills are especially evocative.

By 1932, Rotha had become an established documentary technician, directing *Contact;* and, in an article in *Cinema Quarterly*, he records with an agreeable lyricism some impressions of the 22,000 mile journey by Imperial Airways during which the film was shot. A production still from *Contact* showing him at Assiut in Egypt is contrasted with one from 1952 in which a plumper and middle-ageing Rotha directs *World Without End* in Mexico—"the happiest and most harmonious picture on which I have worked." Between these dates, he had developed in the war years his most characteristic kind of film with *World of Plenty*, made a feature film (*No Resting Place*, mentioned only in a footnote), had the ear of Stafford Cripps with a memorandum on "The Future of the British Film Industry", here printed for the first time, and battled as a publicist for his own radical ideas on various fronts, national and international.

What then is the image that emerges? There is first of all the film critic and historian, the incomparably experienced connoisseur of movie. The thirty or so films reviewed here include many of the best to appear since the 'twenties. In the main, these reviews demonstrate—and by doing so remind us how thin and ill-informed much comparable work is nowadays—what an accomplished

*" . . . that suspense thriller I'm making . . . which 'they' hope will get an X-certificate". Ann Sears and Lee Patterson in a scene from Paul Rotha's new film, provisionally titled "Cat and Mouse".*

journalist who is himself a professional technician can do, even within the limits of the daily or weekly newspaper column. Not all the judgments, however, are equally perceptive: the critical level drops, for example, with the note on *La Ronde*, which, despite his lavish praise, is undeniably *kitsch*. There is too, of course, Rotha the film-maker, the craftsman loving his trade and able to discuss it in concrete and persuasive terms. Finally, we have the film politician and campaigner (who is represented conspicuously with a number of broadsides, public and private). This third *persona* is at its most effective, and most attractive, when being entirely positive and constructive. Few people alive, after all, have contributed as much to the advancement of the cinema. Less amiable, though, are the occasional touches of petulance and absence of self-questioning. The last appearance in time of the author suggests an underlying ambivalence: "And now," he says, "I must hasten away to finish the script of that suspense-thriller I'm making and which 'they' hope will get an X-certificate."

The volume groups together a number of papers on "the problems of documentary". Elsewhere, in an essay specially written as a foreword to the book, Rotha pays marked attention to David Robinson and the articles he wrote on British documentary in SIGHT AND SOUND a short time ago. Here and there, the tone adopted is, one regrets to say, a little like Lady Bracknell's when discovering that Algernon began life in a hand-bag in the cloakroom at Victoria Station! He is referred to as "a Mr. David Robinson" and "a young gentleman", and Rotha accuses him of downright bad manners to his elders and ignorance of their past pronouncements. My own feeling about Robinson's articles was that he had, on the contrary, spent rather too much time in reading the more musty of his elders' texts, and too little in seeking to analyse the realities, especially the economic and administrative ones, of making documentary films today. However, Rotha was certainly right to correct the false though commonly held assumption, which Robinson seems to propagate, that, despite one or two notable exceptions, the British documentary of the 'thirties was, in Dilys Powell's phrase, an "attacking cinema" or concerned with political and social protest. There is obvious good sense, too, in the advice Rotha gives to the Free Cinema group to be "tough negotiators, patient promoters, persuasive talkers and tolerant critics."

What one misses most in this introductory essay, dated October 1957, is any adequate discussion of the impact of television on his subject-matter. There are scattered references; and Rotha does, it is true, devote the last few lines of his book to saying that television will ultimately alter the whole role of the cinema. This notion is never developed. It is nevertheless already operating, and quite central to the argument of his foreword, affecting even the detail, as for example when he speaks of the heightening of experience which new intimate techniques of sound recording can afford. Neither in this context nor anywhere else, which I find surprising, does Rotha mention the films made by Denis Mitchell and Roy Harris with the BBC's Manchester Film Unit. Yet surely these represent exactly the sort of thing he means when he calls (the italics are his) for "the *creative* interpretation of reality around us in human terms."

JOHN MADDISON.

## IL NUOVO CINEMA ITALIANO, by Giuseppe Ferrara. Illustrated. (Le Monnier, Florence.)

THE SUBJECT OF Giuseppe Ferrara's book is neo-realism. In calling it *Il Nuovo Cinema Italiano*, however, he seems to be trying to place it in a broader perspective, to suggest that neo-realism has been a starting point for a "new cinema" as well as a movement having its origins in a particular period of contemporary history. Looking back over this post-war period, Ferrara endeavours to remain detached from the various arguments which have brought about the different trends within neo-realism. As Carlo Battisti (the professor who played the leading part in *Umberto D.*) says in his preface, Ferrara treats neo-realism no longer as news but as history. As historian and critic, he is using the only valid method for anyone who wants to explore such territory and to draw sound conclusions from his investigation. And he gives a large place in his book to the social, political and economic factors which explain the neo-realist films.

Investigating the origins of neo-realism, Ferrara shows that these were purely Italian, even if individual directors have come under foreign influences. Dealing with the early history of the movement, he is also concerned with the history of our times. Briefly, during the Fascist period the technical foundations of the modern industry were laid, Cinecitta and the Centro Sperimentale (the Italian cinema school) were founded; although neo-realism was to develop as a reaction against the regime, out of the structure set up by Mussolini's administration came several films (*I Bambini ci Guardano*, *Quattro Passi fra le Nuvole*, above all *Ossessione*) which directly foreshadowed neo-realism. At the same time, Rossellini was making the war films which prepared the ground for his *Open City*. After this first bombshell, the following years brought forth a succession of films which have scarcely been paralleled in such a brief period during the cinema's history. Ferrara discusses the directors and their work at length, placing the films always in their immediate historical context. He goes so far, for instance, as never to name an actor, writing about the characters as though they were real. He also considers in some detail the various trends in criticism during the period.

Since 1948, with the reopening of the major studios, restoration of the apparatus of production and distribution, the invasion of American films, and the financial crises which followed, neo-realist films have been made in steadily decreasing numbers, and in an atmosphere generally hostile. There remains, though, the question of how far the post-war Italian films are really to be regarded as marking an important advance towards a "new cinema", how far they are the result of a fruitful but limited period in the cinema's history. At the moment, certainly, the chances that neo-realism can survive, even in new forms, seem fairly remote. Nevertheless, this movement, through its works and the writings it has stimulated, constitutes a national cultural achievement unparalleled elsewhere, and entirely of the cinema. Ferrara's history is lucid and thorough, intelligently and originally illustrated and provided with a useful bibliography and index. An excellent summing up of the post-war Italian cinema, it is also a contribution to the national movement which is its subject.

ALAIN TANNER.

## THE TECHNIQUE OF FILM MUSIC, by Roger Manvell and John Huntley. Illustrated. (Focal Press, 42s.)

THAT FILM MUSIC should go largely undiscussed is, no doubt, inevitable. Leaving aside the special type of film which ranges from the musical to the filmed opera, film music remains (however much its composers may dislike the term) 'background music'. An audience, receiving the impact of such music unconsciously, is not stimulated to rational discussion of it. Professional film critics usually seem inexpert in music (it is a pleasure to find such an exception as Paul Dehn); and professional music critics find no paper willing to pay for them to sit through every press show. Books dealing with the subject have been sparse. Kurt London's

*Film Music* (1936) was a standard work in its time; Hanns Eisler's *Composing for the Films* (English edition, 1951) remains a brilliant individualist study. But now, if the serious student of films feels impelled to own one book on film music, it should be the book under review.

The implied praise must immediately be qualified by regret that the British Film Academy, under whose aegis the book appears, has sanctioned such a poorly produced volume. Although the reader is asked to pay 42s. for less than 300 pages, the book is printed with narrow margins, no 'running heads' (titles at the top of pages, other than those beginning a chapter), clumsy typography, and shiny paper. It is acceptable as a textbook, but somewhat repellent for general reading. Most valuable are its parallel display of stills, description of action, and music-type from the sound-track: but even this material is inserted unsatisfactorily into the general body of the book. The indexing and cross-referencing is poor. The film of Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The Medium*, for instance, is mentioned on p.62, but without a date; there is no way of locating it in the date-list at the end of the book except by scanning systematically until one arrives at 1951; and the index mentions only the early reference, not the date-list. It may be added that the actual writing of the book suffers from some want of precision: "For normal orchestral work a degree—some say a fairly high degree—of reverberation is essential." Why not specify?

After two historical chapters dealing with the silent film and the early sound film, the greater part of the book is devoted to description and analysis of current practice. Then follows a chapter on 'the composer's view' containing much revealing material. Obvious care has been taken to gather opinions and experiences from centres other than London and Hollywood. Some of the views carry an unintended irony: "I have always tried to submerge myself" (Max Steiner). Others are memorable: "In my entire career [of over 300 films] I was only consulted by the scriptwriter about music prior to the finished product once, and that was for *The Informer*. We all won the Academy Award on that picture". (Max Steiner again). "I have had unforgettable experiences with one director who, where music was concerned, was a certifiable lunatic, and I had to discontinue collaboration." (Sir Arthur Bliss).

It is to be wished that the authors had gone into the questions of how far Chaplin really composes 'his' music, and of what evidence there is for the statement (which they repeat) that Meisel's music to *The Battleship Potemkin* was on occasion banned though the film was permitted. The lengthy appendices at the back would be more helpful if they were fuller and more accurate: the list of items from *Fantasia* is incomplete; it is odd to name Alfred Newman as 'composer' of *Call Me Madam*, since Irving Berlin wrote the songs; and there is a crop of mis-spellings and misprints including Rubenstein and Claude Arrau. But my favourite misprint occurs in the main text of the book, when a tune from Walton's music to *Henry V* is said to have "a simple rising and domfalling pattern that inates the shape of the whole sequence." Passed to you, Paul Jennings!

ARTHUR JACOBS.

## THE FOCAL ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF PHOTOGRAPHY. Illustrated. (Focal Press £5 5s.)

PHOTOGRAPHY HAS ALWAYS inspired an extensive literature; the dust wrapper of this book, for instance, lists over two hundred publications on photography and allied subjects by the same publisher. This, however, appears to be the first attempt to gather together in encyclopaedic form a really comprehensive mass both of practical and theoretical material. The difficulties of such a collection are obvious; the greatest is to decide the level to which it should be addressed. The editors say:

> Any encyclopaedia is mostly used for tracking down information on subjects with which the reader is not particularly familiar. No specialist is likely to seek information within his own field of work from a general reference work.

Some articles, indeed, seem rather too superficial to be useful to the sort of person who will think the book worth five guineas. Others are well detailed—even more elaborate than might be expected from the scope of the work. The inconsistency is hardly surprising; the editors were evidently somewhat overwhelmed by the magnitude of their work:

> Having invited authoritative contributions, the editors were under some obligation to present all accounts and views uncoloured by their own opinions . . . editing aimed at a uniform manner of presentation rather than at unduly influencing the matter presented.

Naturally only a small part of the book is devoted to cinematography, and the articles on cinema practice are aimed generally at the amateur, working on sub-standard film. The guidance offered is decidedly technical, and not artistic; Mr. Tony Rose's definition of "LIBRARY", for example, is "a collection of stock shots which may be useful for cutting into future films". The historical articles are of much higher general interest. Brian Coe's entries on cinema history are concise, lucid and accurate; and their importance becomes clear when we remember that the last reliable history of cinematography published in this country appeared in 1899 (Hopwood's *Living Pictures*). Two of Mr. Coe's more curious revelations are that as early as 1898 G. R. Wilson took out a patent for both anaglyph and polarizing methods of stereoscopic films; and that at the first commercial demonstrations of Henri Chrétien's anamorphic system (at the Paris International Exhibition of 1937) two projectors were used to produce an image with a picture ratio of 9 : 1. Helmut and Alison Gernsheim write generally about photographic history, which is, of course, particularly relevant to the early days of cinematography. Dr. R. S. Schultze contributes some excellent brief biographies of cinema pioneers, although an absurd arbitrary rule of excluding living persons means that there is no entry for G. A. Smith. Dr. Schultze's chronology of photographic inventions would have been all the more valuable for a more consistent inclusion of cinematographic discoveries. An entry on "Museums and Collections" is especially helpful for students of cinema and photographic history.

Finally, the cinema enthusiast will discover a special sympathy with Mr. A. Kraszna-Krausz (Chairman of the Editorial Board and author of an excellent article on The Discovery of Photography) who complains in the entry on "Historiography of Photography":

> The historiography of photography is badly in need of more scholarly monographs, dispassionate biographies and thoroughly researched local and national histories. The immediate task of new historians lies in this sphere of working to limited objectives and presenting balanced views of specific areas rather than in staking comprehensive claims of coverage based on incomplete or uneven material.

DAVID ROBINSON.


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# Correspondence

## James Whale

*The Editor*, SIGHT AND SOUND,

SIR,—There is an interesting footnote to Roy Edwards' memorial tribute to James Whale in your Autumn issue. The classic sequence of *Frankenstein* in which the Monster throws the little girl into the lake, which Mr. Edwards aptly comments "seems as full of conceits as a metaphysical poem", was left intact in 1931, and remained so on the film's first re-appearance. Since then, however, *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* have been re-submitted to the censor to achieve the status of a "Double-X All-Horror Programme", and in their latest ordeal by censor a large portion of the scene, the whole conclusion of the conceit in fact, appears to have been removed. It is intriguing to discover that what was permissible for their hardened parents in 1931 is considered too strong meat for cinema-goers today, even with an 'X' certificate.

Yours faithfully,

24 Chalcot Crescent, J. R. TAYLOR.
London, N.W.1.

SIR,—While recognising the fact that "James Whale is mainly cherishable today for his *Frankensteins*, *Old Dark House* and *Invisible Man*, it does seem surprising that Roy Edwards, the writer of the tribute to Whale, makes no mention of his *Waterloo Bridge* (1931). Two later versions have been very weak remakes of this fine film. To my mind this film and *A Kiss Before the Mirror* (1933) were his finest achievements. Both were not only impressive but fully satisfying and gave the impression that no hand could have made them better. This is certainly not the idea one has after seeing the horror films.

Mr. Edwards has made a start, but surely it is time for revaluation of the whole of the work of James Whale. Other films directed by him and not mentioned in the article are *The Impatient Maiden* (1932), *One More River* (1934), *The Great Garrick* (1937), *Sinners in Paradise* (1938), *Wives Under Suspicion* (1938), *Port of Seven Seas* (1938). This last film is interesting. Made for Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer, it is Whale's version of Marcel Pagnol's play *Fanny*. *One More River* came from a story by John Galsworthy, with R. C. Sherriff getting credit for the screenplay. While not flawless it was a most intelligent film, capturing much more successfully the flavour of Galsworthy than the later *The Forsyte Saga*. *One More River*, *By Candlelight* and the two above which most impress me, would seem to indicate another aspect (and to my mind, more important) to the work of this neglected talent.

Yours faithfully,

Buller Street, EDWIN V. DYER.
Charlestown 2.N.,
New South Wales.

## "The Pajama Game"

SIR,—Your critic, David Vaughan, must surely have slept through three-quarters of *The Pajama Game* if he mistook the hero for a trade union official, thus missing the point of the story: the tug-of-war between love and loyalties. *He* is the Superintendent and *she* is the Grievance Committee. Maybe this accounts for his lukewarm review.

Hardboiled? To anyone who knows factory life: the mean employer, the plausible rate-fixer, the drudgery, the speed-up—enlivened by the longed-for dinner break, the five o'clock bell, the labour disputes, the annual outing, the gay companionship of one's fellow workers, *The Pajama Game* is exhilarating.

Unpromising material? To anyone who has been through the torture of a 'go-slow', acted as 'grievance committee' (shop steward) carried a strike banner, won an increase, it is a wonderful, joyous re-creation of life. (And, incidentally, streets ahead of the book.)

How insipid the slender threads on which the average British musical is based, when all around, in factories, canteens, markets, pits, docks, depots, building sites, seethes the stuff of life, where real people get through the chores and come out on top: all promising, full-blooded material for hilarious, pointed and realistic films, musical or otherwise. Hats off to the Americans for taking the field, and no credit to our own army of producers, directors, writers, composers—and critics—for not seeming to know it exists.

Yours faithfully,

247 Bath Street, HELEN FULLERTON.
Glasgow.

*We regret the slip in the review of "The Pajama Game"—the hero is, of course, a management and not a union official.*—EDITOR.

## "Cyprus Is An Island"

SIR,—I never saw the original screening—my introduction was the fortuitous purchase of a small book about the film. I read and enjoyed this book several times until, one day, I found I could hire a 16mm. copy. I count it as one of the pleasant things in my life to have seen this film on the screen after having prized the book for several years.

As I am presumably one of the people whom the film was intended to instruct and entertain, I think it did its job and did it well.

Yours faithfully,

Four Gables, PHILIP BROWN.
Duffield Road,
Allestree, Derby.

## Robert Flaherty

SIR,—We are preparing a book on the life and works of Robert J. Flaherty, the explorer and pioneer maker of documentary films. If any of your readers have letters, MSS, photographs, or personal recollections, we should be very grateful to receive them. Original documents, etc., will be carefully kept, and returned in due course.

Yours faithfully,

9, Great Chapel Street, PAUL ROTHA.
London, W.1. BASIL WRIGHT.

## Louise Brooks

SIR,—I am collecting material on Louise Brooks (star of *Pandora's Box*, *Diary of a Lost Girl*, *Canary Murder Case*, *Prix de Beauté*, etc.), who has been described by one leading Italian magazine as the "greatest star of the European cinema". She has also been described as "G. W. Pabst's Lost Star"—with some justification, as there seems to be a virtual conspiracy of silence about her in this country. If any of your readers possess any stills, cuttings or other material which they would be prepared to dispose of or lend for copying, I shall be most grateful.

Yours faithfully,

4 Denmark Place, D. J. IBBERSON.
Charing Cross Road,
London, W.C.2.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER for *Reckless, The Harvey Girls, Born to Dance, Broadway Melody of 1936, Ziegfeld Follies.*
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Desire Under the Elms, Funny Face, Wild is the Wind.*
RANK ORGANISATION for *Violent Playground, The Gipsy and the Gentleman.*
UNITED ARTISTS for *The Quiet American, Quatermass II.*
20th CENTURY-FOX for *No Down Payment.*
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *La Belle Equipe, Toni, Rain, Ivan the Terrible,* photograph of Charles Pathé.
MIRACLE FILMS for *Et Dieu Créa la Femme.*
FILMS DE FRANCE for *The Picasso Mystery.*
CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *The Seventh Seal.*
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ASTRID BERGMAN SUCKSDORFF for *En Djungelsaga.*
LES FILMS MARCEAU for *Les Mauvaises Rencontres.*
GARANCE FILMS for *The Seine Meets Paris.*
BBC TELEVISION for photographs of Ealing and Denham.
ANGLO-AMALGAMATED for photograph of cinema queue.
KINEMATOGRAPH WEEKLY and RICHARDS STUDIO for photograph of the Regal, Penzance.
ILLUSTRATED for photograph of Odeon Cinema.
ISSKUSTVO KINO for Eisenstein's sketch of Pimen, *Ivan the Terrible.*

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# A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

*Films likely to be of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two or three stars.*

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***APARAJITO (*Contemporary*) The second part of Satyajit Ray's trilogy, taking the schoolboy Apu from Benares to Calcutta and ending with his mother's death. More intricate than *Pather Panchali*, equally impressive as an evocation of human experience.

APRIL LOVE (*Fox*) Young delinquent, sent on probation to an uncle's farm, keeps up his interest in hot-rods but discovers the milder pastime of sulky-racing. Innocent entry in the current teenage cycle. (Pat Boone, Shirley Jones, Dolores Michaels; director, Henry Levin. CinemaScope, Eastman Colour.)

*AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS (*United Artists*) Mike Todd's "show" is a film like any other—but twice as long as most. Good performances by David Niven and Cantinflas and exotic guest appearances help pass the time. (Director, Michael Anderson. Todd A-O, Eastman Colour.)

*BONJOUR TRISTESSE (*Columbia*) Otto Preminger erratically steers an international cast through the shallows of Francoise Sagan's novel. Plenty of Riviera gloss, but the wrong brand of decadence. *Reviewed*. (Jean Seberg, Deborah Kerr, David Niven. CinemaScope, black-and-white and Technicolor.)

*CALABUCH (*Curzon*) Noisy, sunny and rather indeterminate little anecdote about a famous atomic scientist who finds peace of mind in a quaint Spanish village. *Reviewed*. (Edmund Gwenn, Franco Fabrizi, Valentina Cortese; director, Luis G. Berlanga.)

*CARVE HER NAME WITH PRIDE (*Rank*) Over-fictionalised tribute to war heroine Violette Szabo, given vitality mainly through Virginia McKenna's unequal but dedicated playing. (Paul Scofield, Jack Warner; director, Lewis Gilbert.)

CHASE A CROOKED SHADOW (*A.B.-Pathé*) Michael Anderson's sub-Hitchcock thriller in which a diamond thief and murderer is exposed by *Gaslight* methods. An attempt at virtuoso sympathy-switching and suspense, with tension finally too unrelieved to make its full effect. (Richard Todd, Anne Baxter, Herbert Lom.)

DARBY'S RANGERS (*Warners*) War melodrama about a crack American commando unit trained in Britain, interspersing big battle scenes with romantic interludes. Striking playing by Jack Warden. (James Garner, Etchika Choureau; director, William Wellman.)

DON'T GO NEAR THE WATER (*M-G-M*) Comedy about a U.S. Navy public relations unit, with standard and sub-standard jokes about the strain of war on non-combatants. Episodic, and funny in brief snatches. (Glenn Ford, Gia Scala, Earl Holliman; director, Charles Walters. CinemaScope, Metrocolor.)

FEMALE ANIMAL, THE (*Rank*) High-pitched emotional romance about Hollywood amours. The minor *Sunset Boulevard* triangle of ageing star, her daughter and a handsome young extra lacks the essential bravura. (Hedy Lamarr, Jane Powell, George Nader; director, Harry Keller. CinemaScope.)

GIFT OF LOVE, THE (*Fox*) Young wife, discovering that she is dying, adopts a problem child from an orphanage to give her husband companionship after her death. Slightly more sophisticated remake of *Sentimental Journey*, with cool and composed playing by Lauren Bacall. (Robert Stack, Evelyn Rudie; director, Jean Negulesco. CinemaScope, De Luxe Color.)

GOLDEN DISC, THE (*Butchers*) Patently apocryphal account of the professional origins of rock'n'roller Terry Dene. A feeble espresso saga, it has Dennis Lotis and Nancy Whiskey for the more discerning teen-age market. (Lee Patterson, Mary Steele; director, Don Sharp.)

HELL BENT FOR GLORY (*Warners*) An American youngster, a trainee in the French air force in the 1914 war, finds an idyll with a *fille perdue* and persuades her into respectable employment in the Paris Metro. Good period flying scenes. (Tab Hunter, Etchika Choureau, Marcel Dalio; director, William Wellman.)

*INNOCENT SINNERS (*Rank*) Well-intentioned adaptation of Rumer Godden's novel *Episode of Sparrows*, efficiently directed and with good child acting. Despite script flaws, it is not without charm. *Reviewed*. (Flora Robson, David Kossoff, Barbara Mullen; director, Philip Leacock.)

PARIS HOLIDAY (*United Artists*) Rather spectacular teaming of Bob Hope and Fernandel in a crime comedy, with Anita Ekberg as a *femme fatale*. If it is not, eventually, hilarious, it is not for want of trying. (Martha Hyer; director, Gerd Oswald.)

*PEYTON PLACE (*Fox*) Best-selling exposé of New England small town life, in a screen version which retains rape and murder, reduces the novel's ration of sexual skirmishing. Long and smooth. (Lana Turner, Hope Lange, Lloyd Nolan, Diane Varsi; director, Mark Robson. CinemaScope, Eastman Colour.)

**PICASSO MYSTERY, THE (*Films de France*) Clouzot's somewhat over-dramatised attempt to film the artist at work is still an engrossing experience. A mischievous Picasso takes it in his stride. *Reviewed*. (Eastman Colour, part in CinemaScope.)

*QUIET AMERICAN, THE (*United Artists*) Joseph L. Mankiewicz's version of Graham Greene's novel more or less reverses all the roles in the action, thereby demolishing its moral problem. Good playing by Michael Redgrave. *Reviewed*. (Audie Murphy, Giorgia Moll.)

ROONEY (*Rank*) A marriage-shy Dublin dustman dodges a succession of matrimonially minded landladies. Rather heavy-going blarney, with neat playing by Barry Fitzgerald, Noel Purcell and Jack MacGowran. (John Gregson, Muriel Pavlow; director, George Pollock.)

SAFECRACKER, THE (*M-G-M*) Ray Milland's first British film as star and director is about a safe-cracker who is turned into a commando but loses his life through a moment's reversion to earlier interests. Fair excitement, though the material is rather thinly stretched. (Barry Jones, Jeanette Sterke.)

SAYONARA (*Warners*) *Madame Butterfly* up to date, with an American airman falling in love with, having qualms over, and finally marrying a Japanese actress. Makes heavy weather of its race-relations theme. (Marlon Brando, Miiko Taka, Red Buttons; director, Joshua Logan. Technirama, Technicolor.)

*SEA WALL, THE (*Rank*) Dino de Laurentiis (producer), René Clément (director) and Irwin Shaw (writer) have made something of an international hash out of Marguerite Duras' novel about French settlers in Indo-China. Extravagant exoticism and some interesting playing. *Reviewed*. (Anthony Perkins, Silvana Mangano, Jo Van Fleet.)

SEVEN HILLS OF ROME (*M-G-M*) Extended travelogue of Rome attached to a fatuous story, with Mario Lanza singing good and loud throughout. (Renato Rascel, Marisa Allasio; director, Roy Rowland. Technirama, Technicolor.)

**SEVENTH SEAL, THE (*Contemporary*) Intense, occasionally obscure, medieval fantasy concerned with such fundamentals as the nature of faith and the mystery of death. An exciting conception, both filmically and intellectually. *Reviewed*. (Gunnar Bjornstrand, Nils Poppe, Bibi Andersson; director, Ingmar Bergman.)

SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD, THE (*Cinerama Productions*) Another large-screen world tour, taking in the sights of Greece, Japan, India, etc. Travel *via* Cinerama is losing something of its novelty value, and the new instalment carries excess baggage in the form of Lowell Thomas's deadening commentary. (Various directors. Technicolor.)

SHE WOLVES, THE (*Cross-Channel*) Grand Guignol study in greed and suspicion from a novel by the writers of *Les Diaboliques*. More gloom than tension, with a ruthlessly calm performance by Micheline Presle. (François Perier, Jeanne Moreau; director, Luis Saslavsky.)

SILENT ENEMY, THE (*Independent/British Lion*) Decent, rather subdued war melodrama, dealing with the exploits of the late Commander Crabb against Italian frogmen in Gibraltar in 1941. Some good underwater scenes; enthusiastic playing by Laurence Harvey. (Dawn Addams, Michael Craig; director, William Fairchild.)

STORY OF DR. SCHWEITZER, THE (*Gala*) Six-year-old French eulogy of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, relating an early episode of his work at Lambarene. Indifferent adaptation from the stage, with Pierre Fresnay failing to come to grips with the nature of Schweitzer's inspiration. (Jeanne Moreau, Raymond Rouleau; director, André Haguet.)

*STREET OF SHAME (*Gala*) Mizoguchi's last film, set in a Tokyo brothel, traces the unhappy lives of half-a-dozen prostitutes. Sober observation and sharp social awareness, handicapped by a poor script and some unwelcome electronic sound effects. *Reviewed*. (Machiko Kyo, Michiyo Kogore.)

TALE OF TWO CITIES, A (*Rank*) Black-and white adaptation of Dickens, done modestly and with fair fidelity to the text but entirely missing the sweep of the book. Rosalie Crutchley's barn-storming Madame Defarge comes closest to the right romantic scale. (Dirk Bogarde, Dorothy Tutin, Cecil Parker; director, Ralph Thomas.)

TEN COMMANDMENTS, THE (*Paramount*) De Mille's second film of this title is more monumental than spectacular. The tone ranges from heavy reverence to Hollywood fantasy; Charlton Heston is beefy as Moses; H. B. Warner and Henry Wilcoxon yield a little nostalgia. (Anne Baxter, Yvonne de Carlo. VistaVision, Technicolor.)

VIOLENT PLAYGROUND (*Rank*) Juvenile crime story with sociological overtones, in which psychotic young gang-leader holds a classroom of school children as hostages before his final arrest. Liverpool locations, *Blackboard Jungle* delinquency. *Reviewed*. (Stanley Baker, Anne Heywood, David McCallum; director, Basil Dearden.)

*WILD IS THE WIND (*Paramount*) Drama of a Spanish-American rancher who, in seeking the image of his former, gentle wife, marries her sister (Anna Magnani). Lusty playing leads up to a tame reconciliation. *Reviewed*. (Anthony Quinn, Anthony Franciosa; director, George Cukor. VistaVision.)

YAMBAO (*Regent*) Highly-coloured story of witchcraft in Cuba, with a somewhat abandoned performance by Nina Sevilla as the primitive village charmer. (Ramon Guy; director, Alfred B. Crevenna. Eastman Colour.)

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